NOTES

ALL WRITING IS FIRST-PERSON LIMITED, PRESENT TENSE

BREAKOFF PARTS AS IF THEY ARE IN THE RENPY TEXT BOX. MAXIMUM CHARACTER LIMIT IS 260 CHARACTERS IN ONE LINE.

WHEN WRITING DIALOGUE SHOW CHARACTERS DEFINE IN CAP FOLLOWED BY THE DIALOGUE

HIGHLIGHTED SEGMENTS ARE ONLY IN BRAZILIAN VERSION

CHARACTER DEFINES AS FOLLOWS
A = Anon
F = Fang
S = Sage
R = Rosa
St = Stella
N = Naomi
Nas = Naser
T = Trish
Sp = Spears
Re = Reed

EX
F “get my pronouns right jerk.”
A “show your dino-nuggets.”

WHEN WRITING NARRATION START AND END LINES WITH A QUOTATION MARK

EX
“This is a basic line in a textbox”

“This is a new line in a new textbox”

WHEN WRITING DIALOGUE, MARK POINTS WHERE VARIANT SCENES WOULD BE

ANON CANNOT CALL FANG A 'SHE' IN FRONT OF HER UNLESS NEAR THE END OF THE GOLD ROUTES.

REED USES STONERSPEAK

SPEARS IS A STRAIGHT-SHOOTING YET WELL SPOKEN MAN

NAOMI NEEDS EXTRA CARE TO BE WRITTEN, EVERYTHING SHE SAYS HAS A SECOND MEANING.

NASER NEEDS TO BE UNINTENTIONALLY CONDESCENDING, AN ACCIDENTAL JERK

TRISH IS EMOTIONAL WITH DIALOGUE

ANON HAS ENOUGH SURFACE LEVEL KNOWLEDGE IN ANY SUBJECT TO CARRY CONVERSATION, BUT NOT IN DEPTH.
ANON HAS INTERNAL MONOLOGUES

1. first two days anon meets fang

Anon is walking to school. take this time to have him reflect on why he is there. Anon is introduced to Naomi and Naser, and school goes well. People are interested in him as the 'new guy' as opposed to him as a person. Anon gets his papers finalized with Professor Spear and Naomi after class and Naomi suggests checking out a band that's playing in the auditorium, and mentions that there would be refreshments. Anon goes for the free food. The band ends up being terrible and Anon gets the choice to laugh at the band. This choice has no consequences either way. The band stops playing and runs off in hysterics.

A few days later Anon talks about how the last few days have gone. Anon complains about how Naomi is getting on his nerves, but Naser is pretty alright. Anon is invited to sit with Naomi and Naser at lunch. Anon lies about being at the concert the day before, and the conversation has Naser talk about his elder sister a bit, which causes Naomi to make a strange face Anon chooses to ignore. He talks about how Fang hadn't been to school the previous day.

January 6th

Year 201M2020 BC

Volcaldera Bluffs

Weather conditions; cold as balls

It’s my first time living close to water. The idea of ‘marine layer’ is new to me, but I do understand morning mist. This was like it, except infinitely more shitty.

The heavy fog makes navigating to my new school more difficult as I fail to see anything 5 feet in front of me. Like a runt of a tree planted in the sidewalk that I swerve to avoid.

It’s my first time having to walk to school too. My new apartment is in an awkward spot. Opposite side of town, yet no school or public bus to take me from there.

The air is cool and wet, and I can feel my body grow heavier as I get closer. I

can’t determine if it’s from the fog soaking my clothes or the welling dread inside me.
It’s my first day at a new school.

It’s the second half of the first semester of senior year.

I had six months left at my old school.

I can’t even imagine the kind of hell those six months would have been.

But this…

It’s the sounds that reach me first. The chatter of people milling about.

???(Sage) Bro

???(Rosa) It’s been too long!

???(Stella) It was only three weeks *Giggle*

Three weeks. It took a day for me to want to change schools, and three weeks to make it happen.

And this is my life now for the next year. I think back to my old man’s ultimatum.

Dad Once the lease is done, Anon, either college or the service. I don’t care which.

I can make out the building now. The fog shrouding gives the school an ominous vibe to it.

I look at the name written on the arch over the entrance.

Volcano High.

A “Perfect setting for a horror game. Or maybe a shitty WAD.”

The attempt at humouring myself just made me feel more alone.

A check of my phone says I’m 30 minutes early. Wonderful.

I move to the entrance, only to see all of the steps occupied by students.

Their eyes turn to me. Expressions of confusion and contemplation. I can feel their judging stares, the same that had haunted me for four months previous.

I turn away before anyone can call out to me.

My feet carry me over the soggy grass as I look for somewhere else to be.

On the side of the building is where I find sanctuary

It’s a small alcove of sorts. The pavement is cracked to bits and the shrubs surrounding it are overgrown. Even the bench, cracked paint on rotted wood held between two concrete legs, matched the ‘abandoned’ vibe of the place.

It was perfect.

I flop down on the wet bench and the violent crack from it makes my heart drop.

Almost perfect but good enough.

I feel a tightness in my chest, and my lungs fight to draw air in. Head in my hands I can fully understand what I’ve done now.

Six months in a new school.

A year on my own in some rundown apartment in a town I know nothing about.

All on my own.

???(Naomi) “Would you happen to be Anon?”

I look up. The bench broke down.

I lay on the ground, ass hurt from hitting jagged concrete and splintered wood. Thank god for jeans.

??? “Oh my goodness! Are you okay?”

I groan

A “Never better.”

I instinctively apply my ‘chill guy’ facade in the presence of strangers to hide how uneasy I am today.

A hand is held over my face. In my pain addled confusion I shake it.

???(Naomi) “Naser!”

???(Naser) “Right, right”

The hand tightens around my own and pulls roughly. The force is enough for my feet to get under me, stumbling back up to stand before the pair of strangers. It also felt like enough force to pull my arm out of its socket.

A “Uh… Sup?”

Nas “You’re Anon, yeah?”

??? “I’m so glad we found you!”

A “... Who are you guys? And why do you know my name?”

??? “Where are my manners! My name is Naomi, student council president and your guide. It’s my sincere pleasure to make your acquaintance Anon!”

Nas “We’re your welcoming committee.”

Is that really necessary?

A “O-kay then.”

N “I had this prepared just for you!”

The Cotton Candy Coo Coo hands me a brochure.

Volcano High and You. A new beginning to adulthood.

The title alone makes me gag. The pink one, Naomi, looks at me expectantly.

The brochure is full of the typical trivialities. College prep, financial

assistance, after school programs. None of it matters.

Nas “Babe, I’ve got some things to take care of.”

Naser looks back to the school entrance. I follow his eyes and see some people trying to lift a large speaker up the stairs of the school.

N “O-oh.”

N “I’ll see you at lunch, right Naser?”

She looks hurt.

Nas *chuckles* “Of course.”

Naser pulls her into a hug and nudges his muzzle against hers. Is that how dinos kiss?

He leaves, running quickly to assist with the heavy sound equipment.

N “ahem”

I turn back to Naomi. She smiles again, though there is a plasticity to it.

N “How about I show you the campus, Anon? We wouldn’t want you getting lost on your first day, now would we?”

A “Mm, sounds good.”

Instead of using the main entrance Naomi led me to a side entrance. Inside, the school looked like your stereotypical school hallway.

Lockers and posters along the walls. Doors interspersed equally all the way down. More students milling about before class.

N “Anon, may I see your class schedule?”

I pull the folded up sheet from my pocket and hand it to her. She unfolds it delicately and scans the page thoroughly.

N “Oh my gosh! We share a home room Anon!”

Oh wonderful.

N “Speaking of, class will be starting shortly. Follow me. Mr. Tsuki’s classroom is this way.”

I follow after her to a classroom on the 2nd floor. The seats are being filled with students. I take one near the front, knowing I’ll have to introduce myself. I’ll probably be doing that for all my classes.

Fuck my life.

The artificial ring of a bell blares from a speaker on the wall. With it everyone waits as the teacher finally enters the room and shuts the door.

Mr. Tsuki “Ohayo gozaimasu curassu. Tudei yu habu e niu curassu-meito tsu Borukeino Hai.”

What.

Mr. Tsuki “Anon-kun puriizu camu appu zen intorudiusu yooru serfu.”

Naomi coughs and makes a subtle nod up.

OH!

I stood from my seat and faced the class. Once again all eyes on me and the tightness in my chest returns. I inhale deep, willing my erratic heart to slow.

A “Hey…”

Again those eyes, just like three weeks ago.

A “My name is Anon. I uh…”

Just like every day for the past four months.

A “I don’t really have any hobbies.”

I wanted to flee. Hide away. Anything to avoid those judging eyes.

N “Why did you transfer here?”

My throat clenches. It’s an innocent question. But I think back again to it all.

A “uh… I…”

There’s whispers now. The hushed tones, silenced snickers, blending with the everpresent stares. My heart hammers at my chest and I am sure that they all can hear it. See the cold chill racing over me.

Mr. T “Anon-kun, yuu du natto habu tsu ansaa zattu”

His words snap me out of my trance. Only Naomi was looking at me. The rest were preoccupied.
Either talking about their winter break. Or catching up on sleep.
They’d all ignored me.

They’ve all been ignoring me the entire time.

Mr. T “Puriizu retaano tsu yo shiito, Anon-kun. Hai, nao curassu-”

That was nothing like my Japanese animes.

Mr. Tsuki continued on, drawing what little attention there was to himself. I sat down, finally feeling the blood that had caught in my legs rush up, leaving me lightheaded.

And I probably have to do this for each class today?

Double fuck my life.

The teacher talks about the time table for the rest of this semester. Midterms are in two months, translating to a lot of all-nighters. I’ll need to stock up on more Gamer Fuel™.

That means less funds for food. My parents may be paying for my rent but I still need to feed myself. I take mental inventory of my kitchen.

A couple cases of instant ramen… And a 12 pack of storebrand coke…

Shit. I hope the cafeteria is decent here.

I wonder how much dealing drugs pays.

The false bell cuts through my thoughts. Naomi stands by my desk, waiting patiently.

N “So on to your next class. Would you like me to take you there?”

I hope she isn’t always like this. So damn… Happy… and excited…

A “I think I can manage.”

N “Oh. Okay then Anon. If you need any more assistance you can come find me. Or you can consult the brochure too.”
Brochure? Wait.

A “Actually!”

Naomi turns back to me.

A “I uh… I need financial assistance.”

N “Oh my. Is it serious Anon?”

A “Kinda. I’m living on my own.”

N “I see. In that case, I think you could talk with the principal. I’ll take you to him.”

I nod. Naomi grabs my hand and...

…

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA

ALERT

ALERT

DEFCON LEVEL ONE! DEFCON LEVEL ONE!

FEMALE MAKING PHYSICAL CONTACT

DO NOT PANIC

DO NOT PANIC

GET A GRIP ON THE SITUATION

THIS IS NAOMI. SHE’S TAKING ME SOMEWHERE BY THE HAND HAND HAND HAND

SHE ALREADY HAS A BOYFRIEND DOESN’T SHE?

WAIT

SHE ALREADY HAS A BOYFRIEND

I AM SAFE.

Okay, okay. Just stay silent and don’t make a mess of things.

…...

It’s so soft, and smooth, and surprisingly warm for scales.

How lewd.

N “Here we are Anon. Principal Spears should be able to help with your money situation.”

Huwhat.

Oh. Right.

Naomi knocks on the door.

???(Spears) “State your business!”

N “The new student needs financial help, Principal Spears.”

Sp “Lend him a five!”

N “I think he means the loan program, sir.”

Sp “...”

Sp “Send him in.”

I open the door to the cramped office, expecting to see a gruff cave of a workspace.

Instead, it was a fairly well furnished space complete with armchairs and cabinets of old photos.

Mr. Spears is a large man, dwarfing any of the teachers who work under him. He seemed to carry himself with a professional aura despite the fact he wouldn’t look out of place at a three-way sacrifice wrestling match.

Sp “You going to stand there forever? What are you waiting for? Sit.”

I plant myself in one of the armchairs and sink a bit lower into the cushion than expected.
Perks of being a human, I guess.

Sp “What’s your situation? Not many people have to use the school’s financial services.”

I explain my situation to Mr. Spears. He closes his eyes and nods along thoughtfully.

Sp “Here’s what we can do for you. We got some lunch cards that save up the total cost of lunches you buy with it.”

Sp “You don’t have to worry about paying until after graduation. No interest, no down payments, none of that.”

A “I uh… Would appreciate that.”

Sp “We’ll get you the card as late as tomorrow. You’ll have to sign for it as well.”

A “Thank you, Principal Spears.”

Mr. Spears nods and gives a small smile.

Sp “You can come in anytime. I’m always here to listen. Except for topics relating to estrus season.”

I sense great exhaustion in that last bit.

I thank Mr. Spears one last time and exit the Office with a note telling my teachers I wasn’t ditching.

Checking the clock, it’s nearly time for third period.
I find my way to second period with just enough time to give another introduction.

Yay me.

Third through Fifth period were the same.

I would be asked to introduce myself by the teacher. I’d then stand up and be as brief as possible.

It got easier each time. No one actually gave a fuck. Knowing that helped, they didn’t want to know me and in all honesty I didn’t care to know them.

Eventually, lunch comes around again. I don’t have the lunch card yet, so I settle for a pseudopizza. The kind that becomes a viable weapon if you leave it alone for ten minutes.

No time to waste after exiting the line, I scan the lunchroom for an open seat.
I thought I had found a decent spot in the corner when disaster struck.

Said disaster was a hand grabbing my shoulder and turning me about. My plate of pizza shaped edible cardboard threatened to smear across my shirt. I fought the momentum of the tray until the hand that had spun me stabilized it and me.

Nas “Whoa there! Nearly dropped your food Anon.”

A “Yeah, whose fault is that?”

Nas ”...Yours?”

I swear to all that is good and holy.

Nas ”Wanna sit with us?”

What?

Nas ”Wanna sit with Naomi and me? Since you’re new and all.”

He points to a table where the living pink sugar rush is waving. God damn it.

I don’t want to make a scene.

A “Suuuure…”

Before I even sit down the barrage of questions begins.

N “SO! How’d it go! Did you like Spears? Were you able to get what you need?”

I just nod along, starting to not pay attention.

N “Have you had any trouble since then? Do you have enough money for food today?”

Nas “Oh, you’re short on food money man?”

I perk up at Naser’s interjection. Naomi looks disappointed for a second.

A “Not really, just had to sign up for some handouts.”

Nas “If you need a bit more extra chow, there’s going to be free refreshments at my sisters’ concert after school today.”

A “I dunno about concerts, I’m not really one for public events like that.”

Nas “Alright man, just thought you could use a few opportunities to make friends.”

What was that?
I’ll pretend that wasn’t meant to be malicious.

A “I’ll consider it.”

N “Hey! Don’t leave me out of the conversation!”
“How about I help you pick out some cheap food after school?”
“I know some great vegan shops in the area!”

My stomach roils at the V-word.

A “Maaaaybe another time, sorry. So about that concert Naser?”

Dinner and a show? Sign me the fuck up.

A “So what do they play?”

Nas “Music.”

A “Music?”

Nas “Yes.”

A “What kind?”

Nas “The kind you listen to.”

What.

A “What genre?”

Nas “The good kind?”

A “You don’t know, do you.”

Nas “Nope.”

Well, free food is free food.

I look at my pizza, noticing something is wrong. I test it with my plastic spork and watch the cheap utensil shatter to bits.

I curse life for a third time today.

The dreaded ten-minute mark has passed, rendering my ‘pizza’ only useful as building material.

N “Oh dear. Naser why don’t you split your sandwich with him?”

Nas “But it’s my sandwich!”

N “It’s fine, we can split my vegan TLT!”

Naser shudders and looks at his own footlong philly sub longingly.

Nas “S-sure thing, babe.”

He tears the sandwich in two and hands me the larger half.

Nas “Here Anon.”

I will never forget your brave sacrifice.

With that we all dig into our meal.

--After school--

My classes after lunch were the same as before it. By now I had a rehearsed introduction that only the teacher cared about. My classmates were disinterested and I would sit down to be forgotten.

I hope the rest of the year is just like that. I just want to skate through it all.

All that’s left for today is the concert. And dinner. I wait outside the auditorium entrance with Naser, who was checking his phone for messages.

Nas “Right, sis says the show is starting in a bit. See?”

Naser turns the screen to me.

Piss off.
Is the pizza here?
You can have a slice
But after that you GTFO

A “Is she always like this?”

Nas “She’s....”

I wait for him to continue.

Nas “Well um…”

Nas “I mean, kinda?”

A “Glad I’m an only child.”

Naser glares at me.

Nas “She’s still family.”

A “Ah, sorry. Just saying is all.”

Naser deflates.

Nas “You’re good, Anon. And yeah, she’s family but she’s just so… so…”

A “Difficult?”

Nas “YES! Difficult! And I don’t know why.”

A “Sounds rough.”

Nas “She is. Like, I know she cares but she doesn’t even wanna be around me.”

A “Hmmm.”

Finally the doors open and I smell the cheesy, heart clogging goodness within.

Nas “Sweet. Come on, Anon.”

Principal Spears holds open the door for everyone. Naser leads me and the large crowd into the shitty school theater.

The foyer has tables with boxes of pizzas stacked taller than me.

Nas “You can take a couple boxes after, Anon. That should help ya out.”

A “Who the hell got all these anyway?”

I take a box down from the stack. Others have already started stacking their plates. I check the logo on the box.

Dino-moe’s Pizza.

And to get so many larges from there?

Nas “I did.”

A “That’s a couple hundred bucks though.”

Nas “Meh, ‘bout a month’s allowance.”

A month? That explains that disaster of a jacket.

A “So about the actual show-”

Nas “I’ll check on them. Be right back.”

Left on my own I stack my plate up with some quality grease topped delight.

I lean against the wall, chewing bits of supreme and observing the rest of the crowd.

??? “-nother shitshow-”

??? “She’s so stupid-”

??? “-they even bother?”

??? “Bunch of losers-”

Everyone seems to share the same sentiment. So why the hell did they even show up for this?

Naser finally comes back and opens the door to the main hall. The crowd moves in, though I hang back so I can talk with Naser.

A “What’s with them, Naser?”

Nas “What do you mean?”

A “The crowd. They were shittalking your sister.”

Nas “What?! Those pricks-”

A “Whoa whoa.”

Nas *frustrated sigh* “I should’ve known.”

A “I don’t, what are you talking about man?”

Nas “I brought them here so my sister has an audience.”

A “Oh.”

Naser’s phone rings. He moves aside to answer it.

Nas “Si-”

The voice on the other end is loud and shrill.

Nas “Yeah I-”

He holds the phone away from his ear to save his eardrum.

Nas “Okay okay I-”

The call ends and Naser sags.

Nas “I’ve gotta leave.”

A “Seriously?”

Nas “Yeah, sis doesn’t want me here. Said I’ll ruin the show.”

Harsh.

Nas “Look, whatever happens promise you won’t hold this against her.”

I nod. Naser hesitates and looks back at the crowd. He turns away, begrudgingly leaving the auditorium.

I enter the hall and take a seat in the back, away from the rest of the crowd. The lights dim and the curtains are drawn open.

Onstage is a trio of people my age. The front-woman stands out the most, wearing well-worn black clothes and framed by a pair of large feathered wings. That must be Naser’s sister.

The band doesn’t bother introducing themselves. Instead the purple one begins plucking her bass.

It all went tumbling down from there.

What I thought was a guitar sounded horrifically wrong, far too heavy. The lead guitarist was using a fucking jazz bass.

And then the vocals kicked in.

It’s horrific screeching, combined with the amelodious shredding on a bass created a cacophony equal to hundreds of cats ritualistically sacrificed.

I fight the urge to cover my ears. I don’t know too much about music, but even I know that you don’t use two basses in one band unless you know exactly what you’re doing.

What were they thinking?!

I looked back to the crowd to gauge their interest. Surely I’m not alone in thinking this is an absolute travesty.

??? “PFFFT AHAHAHA THEY STILL FUCKING SUCK”

The crowd was standing, jeering and laughing with whoever said that. More words were said but the laughter eclipsed them and the music.

Wait, what happened to the music?

On-stage, the trio looked panicked. The drummer was inching off stage, while the purple bassist was about to break down into tears.

But the frontwoman stood there. Stood her ground.

???(Fang) “FUCK YOU!”

She tossed her bass aside, raising both hands and proudly displaying a finger on each of them.

???(Fang) “FUCK ALL OF YOU!”

??? “NO ONE WOULD WANT TO FUCK YOU, BITCH!”

Pffft… That struck a chord with her. I watch as she grabs her bass and takes the arm of the purple one, rushing off stage with the pink drummer.

The laughter continued and drew me in. It was infectious and I realize now that I had been laughing with them.

It continues on, more and more of the audience throwing barbs at the band that wasn’t there, and renewing the laughter that filled the auditorium.

After the third cycle of insults and laughter I decided that the show was done. I turn towards the door and see Principal Spears, a fierce glare freezing me in place.

Sp “Anon.”

His voice is even more stern than this morning.
A “Yes sir?”

He looks to the crowd and then to me.

Sp “I don’t want to hear about any of this come tomorrow.”

Sp “I expect some goddamned maturity from you, Anon. You’ll be an adult once you graduate.”

A “Uh… Why me though?”

Sp “I’ve taught many students, and I can tell these things.”

His hand lands on my shoulder. It’s grip was firm as it weighed on me.

Sp “Listen here, Anon. You are not the only person in the world.”

The hand squeezes before pushing me towards the door.

Sp “Now get out of here, this is the only warning that you’ll get from me. Next time it will be campus clean-up.”

Behind me the principal’s voice shakes the room.

Sp “WHOSE SORRY ASS AM I GOING TO HAVE TO SUPLEX!”

Back in the foyer I see some boxes of partially finished pizza left. I consolidate them all into a pair of boxes and make my exit.

The sun is starting to set now as I make my way home.

Sp “You are not the only person in the world.”

Pfft. Like I don’t already know that. There’s like…

The classmates that all ignored me today.

Naomi’s annoying ass.

That fucking caveman of a principal.

Naser, whose been a bro.

Naser’s Sis-

Oh.

Shit. What do I say to Naser tomorrow? God damn it.

Finally at my apartment I struggle to balance the boxes and get my key in the hole. Before I drop my dinner for the next few days I succeed in unlocking the door.

I don’t bother to turn the lights on, not like there’s anything I’ll bump into. The place is empty save for the bare necessities.

Fridge,

Microwave,

Bed,

Battle Station.

I stuff the boxes into my refrigerator and walk the five steps needed to fall face first onto my futon. With practiced motions I work my clothes off without getting out of bed, ending splayed out on my back as comfortable as can be in a new place all on my own.

In the darkness and silence of my room I slip into a dream where I was on that stage getting mocked.

Fuck.

--Next day; Lunch time--

With the lunch card in my possession I'm able to snag something actually edible. I should run the math on how much I'll end up owing, but I feel more like indulging myself.

Hence my tray stacked high with desserts and the tastiest looking sandwich from the lunchline.

Looking around for a place to sit I see the aggravating creamsicle waving at me. Next to her is Naser with a complicated expression.

Nas "Said I'll ruin the show."

Shit. I go and sit across from Naser and Naomi.

N "You got the card! I'm so happy for you Anon!"

A "Yeah, I picked it up from the office this morning."

I look at Naser as he pokes at his pasta.

N "Naser sweetie, you shouldn't play with your food."

Nas "Huhwha- OH! Anon, what's up?"

A "Not much. And you?"

Nas "Yeah no, totally good!"

He gave a hollow laugh.

N “Naser…”

Nas “Yeah yeah. It’s just…”

Nas “My sister stayed home today. Said the concert was a shitshow. I knew I shouldn’t have invited all those guys.”

Naomi places a comforting hand on his shoulder.

A “I uh… Yeah… That crowd was harsh.”

Nas “What happened after I left?”

Naser looks at me pitifully.

Sp “You are not the only person in the world.”

Ah, shit.

A “The band never made it past the first song. Someone said they ‘still’ sucked. ”

Naser grits his teeth.

A “Whoa whoa, calm down man.”

Nas “What else? Did they say anything about my sister?!”

??? “NO ONE WOULD WANT TO FUCK YOU, BITCH!”

A “...Yeah… I don’t think you’d want to hear it though…”

Nas “And? What happened after! I’m gonna kick all their asses!”

N “Naser! Please calm yourself!”

I realize now that I had been laughing with them.

A “I left after that. Principal Spears was fucking pissed. Even threatened to suplex them.”

Naser sags, emotionally spent.

Nas “Haaaaah.... Fuck… So that’s why she stayed home…”

N “If she wishes to stay home then that is her prerogative. You just need to give her some time, Naser.”

While she said that I noticed a strange expression cross over Naomi’s face.

She’s starting to give me some bad vibes. Beyond just the nonstop annoyance.

Nas “I know babe. I just wish I could help her more.”

A “Yeah. If you need any help Naser, I owe ya for the pizza.”

1.5 fourth day of school

The day after that, Anon sees Fang in the hallway before getting to homeroom. By Anon's words, she looks 'lost and confused.', like he felt just two days before. Later, he is in science class thinking about how those band members hadn't shown up the day before. Fang shows up, and the class completely disregards her. The teacher gives out a partnered project, and everyone else but anon and fang get a partner almost immediately. Anon and Fang end up having to work together, and anon accidentally 'misgenders' fang, and laughs at her again when she gets upset about it. He thinks about her situation more, and connects the dots between what she's doing now and what he went through just two years prior. Anon apologizes to fang, and she tells anon he should apologize to the other band mates as well. Fang starts making small talk with Anon.

In the following period, Anon gets the choice to apologize to the other bandmates or not. (category A). The bandmates open up to him a bit if he does apologize. If Anon apologizes, he walks with Trish to get food from the cafeteria. Reed says he's an 'avid vegetarian' with a chuckle. Fang asks Trish if Anon apologized, if so, Fang is surprised Anon went through with it. If not, she calls Anon a dick. Regardless, Naomi approaches the group, causing Trish and Fang to bail. Naomi seems to have gotten an idea.

“-Two Days Later-”

“*BLEEP* *BLEEP* *BLEEP* *BLEEP* *BLEEP* *BLEEP* “

“The bane of all sleep echoes violently by my head, swiftly erasing any traces of slumber.”

“Still without the energy to turn the alarm off, I stare at the ceiling for a bit, recalling the events of the last few days as an exercise.”

“The school, if you could call it one.
My new friends, if you could call them that.
That band, if you could call it such.”

“Great idea Anon, start the day by dissing everything you've done so far in your new life.
No wonder you're so damn popular.”

“Finally, I lean out of bed and turn the alarm clock off.
I have a good forty-five minutes before I need to be at school, and it takes twenty to walk.
That leaves twenty-five minutes to get ready.”

“With practiced movements I execute a proper combat roll from bed, tackling the floor and headbutt it into submission. My foe defeated, I groan in victory.”

“Picking myself up, I slide into todays’ (and everydays’) clothes and pour myself a bowl of off-brand cereal I picked up the day before.”

“My eyes scan over my phone while I shovel my sugary breakfast into my mouth.”

“*Scroll*”
“*Crunch*”
“*Scroll*”
“*Crunch*”

“Like a poorly oiled machine until it runs out of fuel with a noisy slurp.”

“Soon enough it's time to leave for school.”

“I grab my backpack and slide it over my shoulders.”

“I take my jacket off the hanger and “

“…”

“I take off the backpack and put the jacket on.”

“Opening the door blows the cool morning air in my face, and I stop to take a deep breath.”

“Day four out of however many days are left in the year.
So far so good.”

“I approach the grand building, looking to find a place in line between the other students trundling into the front doors.”

“The halls before class are as crowded as always, hundreds of students filing in unison towards their homerooms.”

“By now I was starting to be able to make my way around on autopilot, I've walked the same path twice already after all.”

“Still occasionally glancing at the room numbers just to make absolute sure, I noticed someone in the countercurrent walking past.”

“It was one of the bass players from the concert two days ago.
Naser said she was his sister, right?”

“Glancing at her for a moment, the expression on her face sort of reminds me of something.”

“It was probably just leftover embarrassment from the concert, but she seemed to have a lost look on her face.”

“Or maybe it was confusion.”

“Or a mix of the two...?”

“Either way there's something on her mind.”

“I can't help but think that that must be how I looked on my first day.”

“But it was my first day of school, she had been going here all year.”

“What's her excuse then?”

“My train of thought was cut short by me realizing I overshot my homeroom while deep in thought.”

“Slightly peeved, I quickly make a U-turn into the countercurrent, maneuvering into the correct room.”

“The day passes uneventfully until fourth period, which is science.

“I find a seat near the back of the room and watch the clock hands tick down the remaining few seconds to the bell.”

“Right before the tone, one last student rushes in, out of breath.”

“Oh, it's that girl again. I guess we shared a period or two on the first day and I just didn't notice.”

“She strides across the room, taking her seat without a word.”

“Strangely, nobody seems to acknowledge her. Not even a sneer or chuckle.”

“That’s odd. Given how many people were there last night, you’d expect at least a couple of snickers.”

“But there she was, being completely left alone…Or ignored.”

“Seems almost worse than getting laughed at.”

“The lingering chatter in the room dies out as the teacher stands from his desk, moving to the front of the room.”

DR FERNSWORTH "Good news everyone!"

"Today we'll be having a lab on magnetic fields."

"Find a partner and get prepared."

“My heart sunk as those dreaded words passed my ears.”

“'Find a partner.'”

“I know it’s pointless, but I at least have to try. Maybe someone was out sick.”

“With my luck though, I’ll probably just end up with that fossil of a teacher.”

“With everyone else already starting on the assignment I resign myself to working twice as hard.”

Dr. F “Hurry up Mr. Anon, your partner is waiting for you”

“...What” [Cue surprised Anon sprite]

Dr. F “Very well. Fang”
[Fang sprite ‘hops’ in surprise]
Dr. F “If you would be so kind to sit next to your new partner.”

“I sat in momentary confusion as someone took the seat next to mine.”

[Forced text speedup through the following 4 lines]
“SPAGHETTI ALERT!! SPAGHETTI ALERT!!”

“DEFCON LEVEL TWO”

“THERE IS A FEMOID WITHIN ARMS DISTANCE LOOKING AT ME”

“DEPLOY ALL SPAGHETTI LOCKDOWN MEASURES”

F “‘Sup.”

A “Thanks, you too.”

“SHIT! RECOVERY MANEUVERS NOW!”

A “I mean, hey. Not much. You?”

“CHAD RECOVERY SUCCESSFUL”

F “None of your business. Just do the damn assignment and don’t bother me.”

A “O-oh. You upset right now or something?”

F “What was your first fuckin’ clue. Last time I’ll say it, just do the assignment and don’t. Bother. Me.”

“Okay! Got to keep coolheaded.”

A “So this assignment, then.”

“With that we open our books and start on trying to decipher who Lorentz is and why

his force is magnetic.
Things are going well for the first few questions, I remember a bit of it from that one time I tried to make a railgun.”

DR. F “How are you two doing so far?”

F “We are… Fine, Dr. Fernsworth.”

DR. F “I see, and you Anon?”

ANON “Yeah what she said.”

“Why is Dr. Fernsworth making that face?”
[worried teacher]
“I turn to Fang to ask her what the deal is and-”
[Anon turns. Fang angry]
“Oh.”
[worried anon shifts behind teacher]
Dr. F “Oh dear”

“Mistakes have been made.”

F “She?”
[Fang’s expression looks noticeably angry]

A “...Yes?”

F “That. Isn’t. My. Pronoun.”

“Pronoun?”

“Fang stands up, pointing at me with a shuddering finger and the theatrical conviction of a thousand Hollywood dropouts.”
F “I do NOT use SHE, I am nonbinary you ASS!”

“Oh god no”

A “I-”

F “You people are all the same! Thinking that you have to go off of what you THINK we are instead of what we CHOOSE to present as. I’m not dressed like a woman, I’m wearing a FUCKING NONBINARY BRACELET, WHY DONT YOU TRY AN-”

DR. F “FANG.”

“It feels like the world just stopped.”

“All eyes are on Fang.”

“And in Fangs’ eyes I see something flash briefly.”

“Judging by those theatrical movements and the eloquent speech, this is something Fang had been practicing.”

“This was supposed to be a big moment where she stopped an evil bigot and the whole class would clap.”

“In all her planning and practice Fang had made one crucial error.
Nobody cared.”

Dr. F “Please consider stepping into the hall for a moment.”

“Sh- Fang is quick to exit the room. Dr. Fernsworth turns a sympathetic look towards me.”

Dr. F “Forgive them, Anon, you must understand that Fang is… Experiencing issues.”

“What the fuck just happened…?”

“Well, she blew up at me when I called her a she…”

“She was already upset about something before…”

“She was upset before because of the concert the other day?”

“Looks like I just pushed her over the edge.”

“After a few moments Fang comes back in and sits down without a word.”

F “...Sorry.”

A “Uh, don’t worry about it.”

“…”
“….”
“…..”

“Now that I think about it, something’s off.”

“Fang claims to not be male or female, but the clothes she’s wearing are clearly provocative.”

“It’s almost like she’s showing off her femininity.”

“Then why?”

“Why would someone be wearing revealing clothes in contradiction to their identity…?”

“It’s almost like they’re just looking for attent-”

“Then suddenly, it hits me. I recall memories of a slightly younger Anon, running around school with a cape, pilot goggles…”

“… And three plastic katanas.”

“That was a quick way to get sent to the principal's office.”

F “Are you even listening to me?!”

A “Dowhatnow? Wasn’t paying attention.”

F “Yeah, I could tell.” She mutters as she turns back to the assignment.

F “Uh.... You’ve been staring at me for the past 5 minutes. Freak.”

“Judging by the looks of the class, and both of our current social standing, we’ll probably be working together a lot more.”

A “...Sorry for calling you a girl.”

F “...”

“Doesn’t seem like it’s something she wants to hear right now.”

A “So um, your Naser’s sister, right?”

F “SIB-ling.”

A “R-right. Sorry.”

F “…”

“There’s a brief pause until Fang speaks up again.”

F “Yes. Naser’s my baby brother, why do you ask?”

A “I was just curious, Naser was the one who invited me to your show.”

F “Of course he did. Can’t keep out of my friggin business for two seconds.”

A “Right. Anyways, I wanna say that I’m sorry about what happened back there.”

F “Hmph, you certainly seemed sorry when you were laughing.”

“Suddenly, the shoes I have on seem far more interesting than the conversation we’re having.”

A “...Yeah. I’m sorry about that. In hindsight, it was a bit of a dick move”

F “More than a ‘bit’.”

F “If you’re really sorry, then…”

F “You’d better apologise to my other bandmates as well.”

A “I… What?”

F “I’ll be waiting with them after school near the auditorium. You better show up.”

A “Hold on, I don’t want to get involved in any weird meetings.”

F “You said you’re sorry, didn’t you? The least you could do is say it with all of us there.”

“...What have I gotten myself into…?”

A “... Guess I don’t have much of a choice.”

F “That’s right, you don’t.”

“The rest of the period passed between continued small talk with Fang.”

“She seemed to be controlling the conversation though.”

“When the bell rang, Fang grabbed me by the arm as I stood up to leave.”

F “Don’t forget. By the auditorium after school.”

A “Alright, I get it. At this point you may as well put a target on my back.”

F “Not a bad idea.”

“She lets go, and I make my way to my next class.”

“Unfortunately, fifth period is mathematics.”

“I’m barely keeping myself awake while Mr. Carlesiidewski is giving a lecture on the inverse of tangents.”

Mr. Carlesiidewski “ANON!”

“I sit ramrod straight at the direct address.”

Mr. Carlesiidewski “Are you listening? Come finish this problem on the board.”

“Just one social disaster after another today.”

“Hesitantly, I slide out of my chair and trundle my way to the whiteboard, trying to decipher the runes I'm expected to make sense of.”

“Only I never made it to the whiteboard.”

“Three rows down and my foot catches on a loose backpack strap in the isle.”

“Luckily I fell sideways and there was a cold hard desk in the way to catch my fall.”

“To the chuckles of the rest of the class, I look up from my final resting place to see a massive pink and white muzzle.”

Re “Dude.”

“Like a deer caught in headlights, I can only stare and wait for him to continue.”

Re “You’re on my desk man...”

“My senses return to me, and I quickly get up, picking up and returning the pencil that flew to the floor in a flurry of apologies.”

“Then I recognise just whose desk I fell on.”

“It’s that drummer in Fang’s band.”

“Don’t I just have the luck of the devil?”

“Giving one last apology, I head to the front of the room to solve the whiteboard problem.”
“I tried solving the problem to the best of my ability.”
“Still took a solid two minutes.”

“After circling my answer, I look expectantly at Mr. Carlesiidewski who gives a nod.”
“Finally turning around to return to my seat, I freeze.”
“Right there in the front row is the last member of the band, Trish.”

“I stumble back to my desk.”
“Mr. Carlesiidewski gives each row a stack of papers to pass back.”

Mr. Carlesiidewski “Alright, here’s the homework covering today’s lesson. I’ll give you the last…” “Fifteen minutes of class to work with your peers.”

“Mr. Carlesiidewski returns to his desk and pulls out a math book with a monthly romance novel crudely stuffed inside it. With very detailed centerfold with the way he turned it sideways.”

“Looking ahead to Reed’s desk, he’s been joined by Trish who is trying to get him to get started.”

“I recall that Fang wanted me to talk to them after school to apologize.”
“Maybe I could just get it out of the way now?”

“I don’t really want to talk to them to be completely honest.”
“I only apologised to Fang because I’m going to be stuck with her for a while.”

“Then again, it’d probably get Fang off my back a while longer if I go above and beyond my call of duty.”

“Guess I'll decide. I’m going to…”

>>Apologize to Reed and Trish now
>>Wait until after school with Fang

>>Apologize to Reed and Trish now

“... I’ll get it out of the way now.”

“What’s the harm?”

“I leave the handout on my desk and creep towards Reed’s desk.”

“Not sure of where to butt in, I stand silently in anticipation until they notice me.”

T “Umm… Can I help you?”

Re “You drop something man?”

“Can’t back down now, I’m already here.”

A “I’m Anon. I uh, was at the concert the other day.”

“Trish rolls her eyes and groans.”

A “I just wanted to apologise for being an ass back then with everyone else.”

“Reed raises an eyebrow.”

A “Well, that’s all. Sorry to bother.”

“I turn to leave.”

T “Wait.”

T “Who put you up to this?”

A “... Fang did.”

T “Wait, you know Fang?”

“Trish’s face suddenly lights up.”

T “Fang barely talks to anyone other than me and Reed!”
“How’d you get them to talk to you?”

A “When I apologised she told me to apologise to you as well.”

T “She?”

“Trish eyes me warily.”

A “They. Whatever.”

Re “Yeah... It’s whatever man...”

“What.”

“Trish looks at Reed, then back to me and shrugs.”

T “Well, he’s a good judge of character.”

“Right”

A “...Right.”

T “Why don’t you help us make sense of the homework?”
“We got a few minutes left, and Reed needs all the help he can get”

Re “Whoa… but didn’t you like… not get number 9?”

“Trish’s hand met her face. Fast.”

“…”

“Ten minutes later, the bell notifies the student body it’s time to complain about the daily food selection.”

“I end up walking to get food with Trish and Reed.”
“I’m able to hold the makings of a conversation with Reed, but it feels like I’m talking to Space.”

“Trish was listening in while we made our way to the lunch room, but rushes forward to meet a familiar face once we get there.”

T “Fang! We met that new friend of yours!”

F “New friend?”

“Fang looks over and sees me approaching with Reed.”

A “Turns out I had the same math class as them. Some luck, right?”

F “Does that mean you…?”

Re “Yeah man, he totally did… Atonement to gain association… Heh…”

“...”

“I thought he was just an airhead, but…”
“I totally can’t get a read on this guy.”

F “Wait, really? I didn’t think he’d really go through with it…”

“Fang looks at me for a brief moment with a questioning expression on her face.”

F “Well, anyways.”
“The lunch lines aren’t going to get any shorter.”
“We should hurry and pick one.”

“Trish and Fang babble to each other about their daily activities all through the lunch line.”

“Once we all got our food, we all stand around chatting a bit more outside the line.”

F “What do you mean my halter top is ‘out’ right now? I haven’t noticed a difference.”

T “I’m telling you, the next thing is going to be leotards.”

F “It’ll be a cold day in hell before I wear one of those.”
“Ohfuck. Sorry Anon, we gotta bail.”

A “Huh? Where-”

“They’re already gone.”
“Pretty impressive how they can move even with their hands full.”
“But what could’ve made them run like that?”

N “ANON!”

“Oh.”

“I turn around to see Naser and Naomi approaching, food in hand.”

Nas “Was that my sister you were hanging with?”

A “Fang and her friends, yeah. Strange group, I know.”

N “I’ll say.”

Nas “She’s not that bad once you get to know her.”

A “Sure hope so. Seems I’m going to be her lab partner for the rest of the year.”

“Naomi pauses for a second.”

Nas “Honestly. She’s just going through a phase man.”

A “That phase include rehearsed rants?”

Nas *sigh* “She hit you with that too?”

N “What a great opportunity for real friendship Anon! I’m so happy for you!”

Nas “...?”

A “...?”

N “If there’s anything Fang needs in these trying times, it’s a new friend to talk to!”

A “Uh, sure. Not like I have much of a choice either way.”

“The three of us sat down at the end of a table and finished lunch together, engaging in small talk until the bell.”

“…”

>>Wait until after school with Fang

“I’ll just wait.”
“If it’s a choice between now and later, it may as well be someplace there aren’t many other people around, yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“I return my attention to the assignment at hand.”
“Seems doable enough. Probably won’t finish in the fifteen minutes though.”

“Eventually, the lunch bell comes around.”
“Unfortunately, I was only able to finish about half of the assignment.”
“With a sigh, I pack everything up and make my way to the lunch room.”

“After getting my food, I notice Fang standing with Reed, looking impatient.”

A “Hey, Fang.”

“Fang sees me and gets an expectant look on her face.”

F “Oh, good timing, Anon.”
“My friend Trish is grabbing some napkins.”
“Don’t you have something you want to tell them when she gets back?”

“Do I? …Oh yeah. I’m still supposed to apologise.”

“When Trish returns Fang looks at me again.”

F “Well?”

“Here goes.”

A “Uh, hey guys. I jus-”

Re “Don’t say it man, we know why you’re here.”

A “Y-you do?”

Re “Yeah man…”

Re “You’re here…”

Re “To eat lunch... aren’t you.. Ya know?.”

“...What.”

A “No, I-”

F “Hold that thought, we gotta bail. You’d better show up after school.”

“Huh?”

“They’re already gone.”
“Pretty strange how fast highschoolers can move even with their hands full.”
“But what could’ve made them run like that?”

N “ANON!”

“Oh.”

“I turn around to see Naser and Naomi approaching, food in hand.”

Nas “Was that my sister you were hanging with?”

A “Fang and her friends, yeah. Strange group, I know.”

N “I’ll say.”

Nas “She’s not that bad once you get to know her.”

A “Sure hope so. Seems I’m going to be her lab partner for the rest of the year.”

“Naomi pauses for a second.”

“Nas “Honestly. She’s just going through a phase man.”

A “That phase include rehearsed rants?”

Nas *sigh* “She hit you with that too?”

N “What a great opportunity for real friendship Anon! I’m so happy for you!”

Nas “...?”

A “...?”

N “If there’s anything Fang needs in these trying times, it’s a new friend to talk to!”

A “Uh, sure. Not like I have much of a choice either way.”

“The three of us sat down at the end of a table and finished lunch together, engaging in small talk until the bell.”

“…”

“After school, I show up by the auditorium as I promised.”
“I don’t have anywhere else to be anyways.”

“After a few minutes, Reed comes striding by.”

Re “Hey, man… You get called here or somethin’...?”

A “Yeah, just waiting for Fang and Trish to show up. You seen them?”

Re “Yeah, yeah… They’ll be here in a bit… Something about uhh… I forget bro…”
“They’ll show up sooner or later…”

A “Hm. Guess we just gotta wait a bit longer.”

Re “...”

A “...”

Re “...”

A “...So, uh… You play videogames?”

Re “Only Xrox… Battle Saurs is sick…”

A “Pachystation has a better lineup overall.”

Re “But like… Stony-games are all lame… like, just movies lame...”

A “You can’t prove that.”

Re “I can.”

A “Huh?”

Re “Get your phone out man… Look up ‘LW_S9znpklI’.”

A “How did you say that out loud?”

Re “Just look it up man…”

“What’s the harm?
…
What on earth…?”

Re “Pretty hilarious right?”

“Looks like a shitty pachystation 3 movie game.”

A “It’s funny in a way, yeah.”

Re “Xrock is better any-”

“Fang and Trish round the corner.”

F “Good, you came.”

“Reed chuckled to himself, and Trish elbows his side.”

F “I think you had something to say to us?”

“At least there’s nobody else around right now.”

A “Yeah…”

A “I was at the concert a few days ago.”

A “I’m sorry for laughing with the crowd”

F “That it?”

A “It was a dick move, yeah.”

A “Please forgive me.”

“Trish looks to Fang and gives a satisfied look, and Reed’s expression doesn’t change.”

A “Right, if that’s all, then I’ll be on my way.”

F “Cool. Get outta here. We got band practice.”

“Walking away, I turn back to look.”
“Fang quickly turns her head away, scowling.”
“I continue my way home.”

“…”

2. showing up at band practice and giving feedback

About a week later Anon is in Math with Reed & Trish. Both characters berate Anon for being friends with Fang as they're incredibly protective of her. Trish specifically takes Anon as a threat to her illusion of security. Reed doesn't care.

Following is music elective, and Anon notices Fang plays the guitar extremely well. He asks Fang why she doesn't just play a guitar in the band, to which she reveals it was the other members' idea so they stand out more. As a 2/1 democratic vote, she feels she has no choice. If Fang brings anon, she would have backing to make the decisions that she wants.

After school, Fang leads Anon to band practice. Fang brings both instruments. Upon arrival, Trish asks why she brought the guitar, with Reed going along with what she says due. Fang brings up her concerns again, which starts an argument between the band members. At this point Anon gets the choice to step in for Fang, interject into the argument, or to stay silent. Interjecting into the argument by saying something like 'you should listen to her more if you're really friends' is the correct answer, and has Fang end up gaining new confidence and the advantage in the argument, convincing the others to let her try to see if it works better. Choosing either other choice has Fang lose like she has so many times before, and results in Reed stonertalking into getting Trish to accidentally agree to letting Fang try a guitar. Either way the change is a massive improvement, and while playing Anon's eyes are drawn to Fang, at this point he starts to get invested in her. After the song ends, the other bandmates begrudgingly agree to let Fang use a guitar from then on. The other members still want Anon to leave. He leaves unless the correct answer is chosen, where Fang wants him to stay to give feedback on other songs.

-One Week Later-

"It's math. Bane of retards and lazy intellectuals alike.”

“And teachers too, judging by the lack of a certain coomer teacher.”

“Substitute today, which means busywork. Group problems busywork specifically."

"Of course, I can't escape this any more than I could have escaped the lab partner assignment.”

“At least here I have the opportunity to just keep to myself for an hour."

"I don't even bother attempting the assignment, instead pretending my phone is a calculator and spending the first half shitposting about video games I haven’t played online."

"The second half, interrupted by something pointy to the back of the dome."

"*sshk*"

"I can feel something stuck between my chair and my back.

“I fish around and pull out a crumpled paper airplane, a completed set of problems."

"...this is Reed's. And it's..."

"...done? Even the extra problems that I don't even bother with because they take

another ten minutes each"

"I turn around to see that technicolor burnout waving me over. He's sitting next to Trish.“

“She's giving me the evil eye."

"At least I think it's the evil eye. Whatever that expression is, it clashes with her smile."

"Might as well see what they want."

"As I weave through the maze of desks squished together with partners more interested in their phones than the worksheet, I catch a hint of whatever Reed and Trish are talking about."

Re "...honesty is the best policy, eh?”

Re “...Bad juju to keep somethin’ bottled up..."

"Reed grabs hold of another chair and sets it on Trish's other side, nodding in my direction before taking a big pull from whatever he's got in that thermos on his desk."

"The widening of his pupils suggest its more than just Roarbucks cold brew in it."

"What could she want anyway, I thought we settled the band thing already."

T "Hey, Anon!"

A "You guys need something?"

T "Nah, just wanted to chat a bit since we got the time"

"There’s something in her tone of voice…”

“ It’s like she's getting ready to gore me with those nubs she calls horns."

A "...Sure"

Re "Imma let you two get to whatever… gonna go for a refill..."

"He shakes his thermos and heads for the door."

"What's in that anyway?"

Re "Don't ask..."

"Fair enough."

"...Wait..."

"Fuck it.”

T "So… Anon… You and Fang?”

A “...You and Fang what?”

T “They’ve been talkin’ about you.”

A “They?”

“The tiny triceratops rolled her eyes dramatically.”

T “Fang. Fang’s been talkin’ bout you.”

A “All good things, I’m sure.”

“Fang’s been talking about me? That’s dumb.”

“All we’ve been doing is more labwork in science.”

[CG of mad scientist Anon with a railgun aimed at Dr. Fernsworth]

“Last Thursday I tried to remember how to make a railgun.”

“To show I could, of course.”

F “Pfft, I could make one too.”

“She seemed unimpressed at the time, but…”

A “Was it about making a railgun?”

T “Er… Yeah, it was.”

T “What exactly are you talking about with them?”

A “Just science stuff.”

A “The railgun is just something I happen to know though, picked it up from an old game.”

“Trish raises an eyebrow.”

T “...Right.”

A “Why do you ask?”

T “You learned to make a deadly weapon from a video game?”

“Her tone is flat. Unlike her chest.”

A “I wouldn’t say deadl-”

T “Don’t interrupt.”

T “Why would you think that it’s a good idea to make a weapon in class?”

T “How did you not get in trouble?”

A “Spears actually did talk to me, said something about the ‘great equaliser’.”

“Trish grabs the bridge of her snout.”

T “This is why men are useless.”

“She continues to mutter to herself. All of it incoherent.”

A “Is there a point?”

“She rounds back on me, anger painted clearly on her face.”

T “Look, Anon, YOU may be into that stuff, but leave Fang out of it.”

T “They have better things to do than… than…”

T “Than play with some man-child’s lethal toys!”

Re “Whoa… Harsh…”

“Reed slumps into the seat next to Trish, sipping on his thermos of…”

Re “Just agua, bro…”

“Thermos of water…”

“What the-”

Re “What’d I miss?”

T “I’m just trying to tell Anon here that he shouldn’t be telling Fang how to make a fuckin’ gun in school.”

Re “Why not?”

T “We’ve been over this.”

Re “We have? When?”

T “Less than five minutes ago.”

Re “Thought we were talkin’ about Anon?”

T “Yes!”

T “And specifically!”

T “We were talking about Anon’s gun!”

“Heads start to turn.”

“Reed grins at them all”

Re “Then how bout these guns?”

“Reed places his hands on the back of his head and flexes his biceps.”

“Trish’s face is a blur of emotions. At first confused, then fucking pissed, then aroused, then back to fucking pissed, all in the space of an attosecond.”

T “Not those! The one he made with magnets!”

Re “But like… how do magnets work?”

“*DING-DONG BING-BONG.*”

“All at once all the students giving the clock a blank stare stand to attention and file out the door.”

T “I-I… Damn it, Reed!”

“Trish punches Reed in the shoulder, gives me another evil stare, and saunters out the room.”

Re “Hey.”

“Reed’s pats me on the shoulder.”

Re “Bruh.”

“He gives me a thumbs up and exits as well.”

“Leaving only the substitute teacher, looking at me from her desk impatiently for me to leave.”

“Guess it’s her lunch period, too.”

“...”

“Naser ended up dragging me to sit with him and the magenta motormouth again.”

“Naomi hovers over Naser, who currently has Gucci under his eyes.”

Nas “So, I uh… Talked to the soccer team earlier.”

Nas “They’re going to make the first game after all.”

N “Isn’t that great, Anon?”

A “...”

Nas “I also… Got the L&L Club to finally take down their christmas decorations…”

Nas “So… The library’s clean again…”

“Naser’s head lands in his chicken salad, then he jerks wide awake.”

N “NASER!”

Nas “OH GOOD LORD NOT THE WATER-”

A “...”

Nas “Ugh… Sorry.”

Nas “...Did you say something, Anon?”

A “Naser, you look like you fell into another blender.”

A “What’s going on, big guy?”

Nas “Don’t worry about it…”

Nas “Just some… Family problems last night…”

A “Like what?”

Nas “Ugh…”

N “You don’t have to tell him if you don’t want to, dear.”

N “Why don’t you wipe that alfredo sauce off your cute little face.”

“She’s so saccharine she’d give a third world country diabetes”

Nas “It’s my sister again…”

“Why is it always his sister with him?”

N “Aww…”

Nas “I was going to sleep last night, when I heard something downstairs.”

“...When did this turn into an interrogation?”

Nas “It was about one or two in the morning. I checked what it was, and…”

Nas “Fang was just, standing in front of the microwave.”

Nas “Staring at the dino nuggets rotate inside.”

“At one in the morning?”

Nas “At one in the morning.”

N “This is a personal issue, isn’t it?”

N “Wouldn’t you rather just be enjoying lunch with us?”

Nas “I just need advice from someone at this point, Naomi.”

N “But from Anon?”

A “But from me?”

“Naser continues.”

Nas “I asked her what she was doing, and she just…”

Nas “Just says ‘fuck off…’, so I think ‘maybe dad will help’.”

Nas “...He didn’t.”

Nas “...They just got into a shouting match.”

Nas “Screamin’ bout her lack of control an’ dad was pissed an’-”

N “Poor baby.”

“Naomi wraps her arms around Naser’s head, cradling the tired pterosaur in her bosom.”

“There’s a rumbling snore and it’s clear that Naser has checked out.”

A “...Riiiiiiiight…”

“Naomi looks distraught.”

N “He’s always like this…”

A “Unconscious?”

N “Trying to help. Wearing himself ragged.”

N “We should help Naser.”

A “What, by talking to Fang?”

N “By taking him to the nurses office.”

“Ah fuck.”

“Naomi looks at me with the biggest, wettest doe eyes possible.”

A “Alright alright. He doesn’t look that heavy anyway.”

N “Only a hundred and sixty pounds.”

A “How do you- nevermind.”

“Naomi puts herself under Naser’s left arm, motioning me to take the other one.”

“I sling his arm around my back and-”

“GOOD LORD HE’S HEAVY.”

N “Alright, the Nurses’ Office is down the main hall on the left side, near the front desk.”

“I’m clenching my face too much to be able to speak, I can only get a slight nod out.”

“...”

“After dropping Naser at the nurse and leaving before Naomi could argue with her about staying, the lunch bell rings.”

“With music at the ass end of the campus I have to sprint through the halls.”

“Fuck today, I avoided gym class for a reason.”

“I slam into the band room door just as the late bell trills, panting and sweaty.”

Mr. Jingo “Good timing, Mr. Mous. Just in time for free period.”

“What…”

Mr. Jingo “Take up anything you like and have fun.”

“The teacher then took to his extremely lavish loveseat, threw on a pair of headphones and blacked out.”

“I looked at the scattered instruments, left alone for whatever reason.”

“Dent looking brass and cracked woodwinds. Even a bass with a missing string.”

“Wow. I feel like that right about now.”

“I reach for one at random, taking a wooden… thing…”

“It looks like an oak tree made love to an eggplant and this is the aborted monstrosity in Mexico.”

“Whatever, I melt into my chair and pull out my phone. Seems a majority of my classmates have a similar idea.”

“I’ve some shitposting to do.”

“Let’s see…”

#phone overlay with Elliot Raptor, and the text ‘he made some valid points :^)’

“Ah yes, perfect. Click post aaaand now to wait.”

“Nefarious deed for the day done, I look around the room out of boredom.”

“Oh fuck no.”

“Fang has a weapon of mass hearing loss.”

“I’m covering my ears in preparation when the ptero-rist starts strumming and…”

“Oh wow.”

“I still have my hearing.”

“In fact she’s actually playing something pleasant.”

“It’s mellow. Relaxed. A slow rhythm that carries a strange nostalgic hint to it.”

“The difference between this and the performance is night and day.”

“What gives?”

“Looking a bit closer, she’s swinging her tail a bit to the rhythm.”

“She uses her tail as a metronome?”

“Suddenly, the phone slips from my hand onto the floor.”

A “SHIT!”

“The sound it makes as it clatters on the ground is a klaxon of pants-shitting terror.”

“It lies face down on the isle.”

“Do I really want to pick it up and potentially face a harsh reality?”

“Schrodingers’ crack.”

“...I can’t just leave it there.”

“I pick up the phone and slowly turn it over.”

“It’s the moment of truth.”

“...No cracks?”

“Thank the Lord.”

F “Yeah, you got lucky.”

“Fang has stopped playing and is throwing a small smirk my way.”

“I should probably say something…”

“Her playing is pretty good, I'll compliment that.”

A “That sounded way better than at the concert.”

“...”

“Wrong choice of words.”

F “You’re still not off my shit list, watch it.”

“Quick Anon, think”

A “Why didn’t you play guitar back then, you’re obviously a lot better with it.”

F “Would’ve if I could’ve.”

A “What do you mean?”

“There’s an empty seat next to Fang.”

“Finders’ keepers, I guess.”

F “The band is just Reed, Trish, and I.”

F “So we all have to decide by majority what happens.”

F “Reed says using a bass is more unique, and Trish always says how it’s a ‘promising business model’.”

A “But it sounds like you play the guitar much easier than a bass.”

F “I play the bass just fine.”

F “I think the problem is more that if you want to make an unconventional band layout, you damn well better know what you’re doing.”

F “If you’re anything short of masterful it won’t sound good.”

F “And when it comes to music, it either sounds good or it doesn’t.”

F “Simple as.”

“She continues strumming.”

A “But it’s just a high school band, right?”

A “Shouldn’t it just be fun?”

F “It is, yeah.”

A “Even though you’re just doing what they want without getting a say in it?”

“Fang flinches and misses a note.”

F “...”

F “It’s not like that…”

F “It’s just… Trish says… I mean… God damn it.”

F “Look, we’re better with two basses. Trish and Reed say so.”

A “The audience said otherwise.”

“Fang growls at that.”

F “You know what, we’re having band practice after school today.”

F “Just show up and see for yourself.”

A “And what if I don’t?”

F “You’ll be a little bitch that’s wrong.”

“Oh.”

“In that case.”

A “Fuck you, I’m right, your band sucks with two basses, and you shoulda been on guitar!”

“I lock eyes with her.”

F “Fuck you!”

A “Fuck you!”

F “Fuck! You!”

A “FUCK YOU!”

Mr. Jingo “Aaaaand we’re caaaaaalm now.”

“Fuck me.”

“...”

F “Hurry up, dweeb. If I can keep ahead of you while carrying two instruments, you can speedwalk.”

A “You sure you don’t want me to carry one?”

F “Pfeh.”

“Fang is leading me back to the auditorium with both the acoustic guitar ‘borrowed’ from the music room and her bass in hand, one over each shoulder.”

“When we eventually get to the auditorium, Fang stops.”

“Is something wrong?”

A “Uh, is everything-”

F “The doors, moron.”

“She swings the guitar cases on her shoulders around a bit.”

“Oh.”

“I step around her and grab the handling, pulling the door wide open.”

A “Ladies first.”

“Fang growls and stomps on my foot as she walks past.”

“...”

A “FUCK!”

F “Hurry up already.”

“Inside, Reed and Trish already have everything set up onstage.”

“Where does Reed keep that huge drumset during the day?”

“Trish waves her arms from the stage.”

T “HEY, FANG! WHAT TOOK SO LONG?”

F “HAD TO GRAB SOMETHING.”

“Trish squints in the spotlight, then finally notices me.”

T “What-”

T “What’s he doing here?!”

“Fang slings both cases onto the stage, then climbs on herself.”

F “Proving a dumbass bigot wrong.”

A “So you admit there’s smart ones?”

“Fang then ripped something from Trish’s hands and threw it at me. ”

T “What the fuck?!”

“It strikes against my head with a dull *tonk* and lands on the ground in front of me.”

“Looking down at the makeshift shuriken, it was a copy of “VVORM DRAMA’s new hit single Indragon Onslaught”

T “Fang! I just made that in art class!”

A “It looks like picasso had a seizure.”

F “He was being an ass!”

A “I was.”

Re “Like… are we on break now?”

T “We haven’t even started!”

T “Fang! Why is Anon here?!”

F “Like I said, proving him wrong.”

A “More like proving me right.”

T “Proving him wrong how?”

Re “Like… Playing guitar, right? Ya wanted to play your guitar…”

T “What?”

F “Yes! I mean-”

A “Ha!”

F “No, I mean Anon thinks that if I used a guitar instead of bass the music would sound better.”

T “What? No wayyyy.”

F “I know, right?”

Re “Woooow… Way to try throwing everything off, Anon...”

F “Mm. Let’s just go through ‘I Need Meth Money By Tuesday Night And If I Don’t Get It I Will Stomp On Your Child’.”

“Don’t say ayy lmao.”

F “Three… Two... One..”
“My mind went blank.”
“I don’t know what happened during the time when it was blank”

--“All I know is that when I came back to reality my shoulders felt wet, I was on the ground, and I had a raging migraine.”

“Trish was standing over me, looking down.”

Re “...This always happens…”--

“I look to the stage and see Fang, panting, looking distressed.”

F “S-see? Totally awesome, r-right?”

“Not the word I would use.”

A “...I think you should give the guitar a try.”

T “Oh shut up, you don’t know anything about music.”

F “Might as well. That’s what I brought him for, after all.”

T “You’re really siding with him on this?”

T “We already decided VVURM DRAMA is better with only drum and bass, remember?”

Re “Yeah man… WAY more unique that way.”

A “Aren’t there like two bands in existence that pulled it off?”

Re “That means there’s a chance then, yeah…?”

A “It can’t hurt to try, right?”

T “You don’t get a say in this, it’s a band decision and we already made our choice.”

F “Maybe he’s right, Trish. What’s the big deal?”

T “The ‘deal’ is we’re wasting enough time as it is when we should be practicing!”

T “Especially wasting time on playing guitar when it doesn’t match any of our stuff.”

“That clearly struck a nerve.”

F “‘Wasting time’ playing guitar? What’s THAT supposed to mean?”

“Fang rounds on Trish, jabbing an accusing finger into the little triceratop’s surprisingly voluptuous chest.”

F “Every time I want to make changes you guys always overrule me!”

F “Even when it’s something like playing my favorite instrument in my own band!”

“Yikes.”

T “Come on Fang, you know I didn’t mean it that way!”

T “We decided that democratically, right Reed?”

Re “Yeah, but… like, there are only three of us, y’know?”

“Maybe I should say something.”

“It’s only going to get worse if I don’t”

“But this seems like a personal argument between them.”

>>Speak Up
>>Stay Silent

>>Speak Up

“Fang does seem very passionate about playing guitar.”

“It could only help their music, right?”

A “Just give Fang a chance, have you ever even let them play guitar with the band?”

“That seemed to stop Trish in her presidential yeezys.”

T “I- uh, well… not really. We voted on it in our first jam session together.”

“Fang made a weird face, like she couldn’t believe I was standing up for her.”

“Honestly I couldn’t believe I stood up for her either.”

“But god dammit I’m winning this challenge!”

A “If you’re really Fang’s friend, you should at least let them try.”

“...”

“Trish’s mouth opened and closed, as if she was trying to find the right words.”

“She threw up her hands and let out a frustrated sigh.”

T “Fine, I guess we can try it with the guitar…”

>>Move to Convergence point

>>Stay Silent

“This is between the members of the band.”

T “In the end, majority still rules.”

T “I’m sorry, Fang, but we can’t get into creative squabbles like this all the time.”

T “And you already agreed to it, right?”

“How controlling.”

“Fang hangs her head in defeat.”

F “I guess so…”

Re “Hey man, Fang… Don’t let it get to you so hard…”

Re “We just gotta get it out of your system’s all, right...?”

Re “Like, y’know, get it all out now so you don’t have to later, yeah…?”

Re “Like Trish said…”

T “I never said that.”

Re “Cuz’, that’s how these things work, right? You know until you don’t, and then all the rest is wack.”

T “I… Guess?”

T “What?”

-- Re "Raptor's like me have experience with this sort of thang."

-- T "What you talkin bout Reed?"

-- Re "Dinos do wrong to each other sometimes and in that way the force of the earth comes around the moon and at that presence the dirt, it overshadows the grass so you're like: ‘I can't cut this grass there's no sun comin' through.’ “

-- Re “So in order to enable each other, the two fruits need to look each other in the eye and understand we can only be ripe as the ripe is wrong. You know what I mean?"

-- T "..."

-- T "Man. I never thought I'd see the day where the only person talkin any sense was you, Reed."

Re “It’s like the bigger picture, you got Fang playin’ bass with all us…”

Re “And they’re all ‘ohh yeah good thing I’m not thinking about playing other instruments, yeah yeah,’”

Re “And you’re all like ‘see, I told you so’...”

T “Yeah, so we should let them play now to get it all out for later!”

T “Wait…”

“If there were any cameras rolling, they’d be zooming in on Trish’s face.”

F “Thanks, Reed.”

T “Yeah, thanks a lot.”

>>Move to Convergence Point

>>Convergence Point

F “Alright, this time we’re doing I Gave The Special Kids The Jonestown Special And Now I’m Going To Jail!”[a]

“...I’m gonna need Raptor Jesus after this one...”

F “And a three, two, and…”

“Opposed to the nostalgic tune earlier, Fang rapidly strums on her borrowed guitar.”

“It’s fast and rough but the tone carried doesn’t melt my eardrums.”

“Watching and listening now I can see and hear the difference clear as day.”

“They’re actually not bad.”

“Not good, not by any metric worth it’s weight.”

“But at least I don’t cringe so hard my spleen erupts from my side and creates a splash zone.”

“I find myself bobbing to the song, in fact.”

“And just as I consider the song ‘gittin’ gud’ it ends.”

“I feel a little disappointed that the show ended so soon.”

“Then I remember it’s not a show at all.”

“And that I definitely won.”

“There’s sweat dripping from Fang’s brow, and her black clothes are clinging to her a bit more tightly.”

“The grin on her face stands out the most though.”

F “See! Totally better with a guitar Trish!”

A “Ha! I win!”

“Trish, Reed, and Fang turn to look at me.”

F “Oh… OH! OH GOD DAMN IT!”

A “So you’re now a normal band?”

F “I mean…”

“Trish scowls.”

T “A vote then. Who votes if we stick to drum and bass?”

“She’s the only one to raise her hand.”

T “fff… And against?”

“Even I raise my hands along with Reed and Fang.”

T “You stay out of this Skinnie!”

A “Skinnie?”

F “Yessss!”

Re “So like… do we gotta redo all the songs?”

F “It’s only one instrument line.”

F “Shouldn’t take too long.”

T “Ugh…”

T “There goes our main marketing strategy.”

“Marketing strategy? I thought she was a triceratops, not a rhinorex.”

A “So uh… I guess I should go now?”

“As I move to the door Fang calls out.”

F “Wait!”

F “We uh…”

“I look to see her fidgeting onstage.”

F “We couuuld uh… OH! Feedback! We could use your feedback!”

T “We what?! Fang, from him!”

Re “Like... He’s alright but… like, for real?”

A “Wha-”

F “He’s been helpful! So why not? Reed, back me up here.”

Re “mmmm… Kay… Anon should stay…”

T “REALLY?! BUT-”

F “Okay now how about ‘I’m Not Sure Why But The Burglar Joined My Threesome.”

“Don’t think about a Threesome with Trish and Fang, Don’t think about a threesome with Trish and Fang, they’re meteor dodgers for crying out loud!”

“...”

“Ok, just for one second”

[CG of Trish and Fang on a bed half-dressed here]

“Fuck.”

“...”

3. Anon needs help during music period

Monday morning, Anon is walking to school when Naomi shows up to start pestering him before he even gets there. She's asking him about his classes. Anon offhandedly remarks about regretting taking music, to which Naomi offers to have him transferred to another elective, or even the student council. A combination of Anon sensing something weird is up and a sense that he values his time with Fang he's not ready to admit yet has him decline. Changing the subject, Anon asks about Naser. Naomi spergs about him until they get to class.

During lunch Anon seeks out sitting with Fang to avoid Naomi. He finds them hanging out in the auditorium, and Fang lets him stay when he mentions he's trying to stay away from Naomi. Fang talks briefly about how her little brother and Naomi bother her so much while Reed and Trish mess with the projector. After lunch Anon and Fang walk together to music class.

During music class, Anon complains about being unable to understand sheet music, as well as his serious case of ‘stupid fingers’. He can’t maintain a rhythm on the guitar he has on his lap and sighs bitterly. He considers asking Fang for help, but she's busy doing sheet music notation. Anon can either choose to not bother her so she gets her stuff done or ask for help, risking that she can't finish her own work. Choosing the former has Anon continue to do terribly until a teacher has Fang help Anon. Choosing the latter has Fang agree to help him, taking up a leadership role for the first time. Anon is eventually able to get past the bit he was stuck on, and Fang smiles. Fang here says she's been working on a song for herself in private. Anon thanks Fang, and she tells him she's willing to help anytime.

“-The Following Monday Morning-”

“I’m on my way to school with my phone out, posting on a shitty imageboard. Baiting people into replying to my posts isn’t the most rewarding of hobbies, but it passes the time.”

A “>Meteor dodgers
>having jobs
pick one and only one.”

“That oughtta get a few.”

“Just before I hit the reply button, I sense the air behind me turn warmer. A few wildflowers growing in the cracks of the sidewalk bloom in seconds.”

“She’s here.”

N “Good morning Anon!”

A “It could have been.”

“Naomi catches up to me.”

N “You say something?”

A “Good morning.”

A “Don’t you walk with Naser to school? Where is he?”

N “He went early today to help set up another student event.”

A “Oh. He’s certainly someone you can count on for that.”

N “He really is! I’m so proud of him!”

A “Yeah…”

N “...”

N “Have you gotten into any extracurricular activities?”

A “Some whatnow?”

N “Are you doing anything after school these days?”

A “Uhh, nothing much. I guess I went to one of Fang’s band practices friday.”

N “Oh, you’re spending time with Fang?”

A “She just needed me for some feedback.”

N “I see. I think it’s wonderful you’re making more friends here!”

A “Could you really say we’re friends? We’ve only met two or three times.”

N “I think you and Fang would make wonderful friends! She needs more friends like you!”

A “Ehh, I’m not gonna force anything. We’re just classmates and all.”

N “In what classes?”

A “Just science and music.”

A “...Ugh, music.”

N “What’s wrong with music?”

A “Just can’t get into it. Seems I’m just doomed to be last chair the rest of the year.”

“Naomi places a finger on her chin(?) for a moment and stares into space. Suddenly, her face lights up.”

N “Oh! What if you asked Fang for help? I’m sure she’d lend a hand!”

A “I dunno... She’s usually busy with her own work, and I don’t want to bother her more than I already do every day.”

N “It can’t hurt to ask, though, right? Just a thought.”

A “Ehh.. Maybe.”

“…”

“The conversation having reached a stalemate, the two of us walked silently for a few minutes.”

N “... So…”

N “You got your eye on any ladies?”

“Changing the subject now.”

A “Say, Naser’s a pretty cool guy, can you tell me more about him?”

“Naomi beams.”

N “Oh, my Naser is just so wonderful! He always nuzzles me when he sees me and whenever he leaves, he’s so smart and handsome, he has such great taste in clothing, too!”
“Oh, one time, we were studying together in the library, you’ve been there already right? Anyways, we were there and he said the silliest thing to me, he-”

“That worked a little too well.”

“While Naomi spergs out about Naser, we finally get to the school. I take the first opportunity to get lost in the crowd of students, leaving Naomi behind giving a sermon on Naser to nobody in particular.”

“Looking back to make sure I’d lost Naomi, I slam into somebody and tumble to the floor.”

(???)Stella “You…”

A “AH!”
“Sorry, sorry sorry!”

“I get up from the floor and look at the person who bumped into me. The plates on her back twitch as she looks me up and down.”

???(Stella) “Judgement…”

“A chill rolls over me.”

???(Stella) “Karma? No. No, maybe second chance?”

“She draws closer, a contemplative expression on her face.”

???(Stella) “Ah, I see now.”

A “What?”

???(Stella) “You’ve important choices to come.”

A “I do? Wait back up what the fuck are you talking about?”

???(Stella) “This.”

“She reaches toward my chest, plucking something off of it. She holds it up for me to see it’s some oversized playing card.”

A “Still lost.”

???(Stella) “It’s you. Your card. You are on the precipice of a great ordeal. Many difficult points of divergence and contention are coming your way. Reflect on them.”

“Before I can ask the green weirdo to make sense the bell rings. Fuck.”

“Luckily, I’m able to slink into homeroom without the teacher molesting me for a tardy pass.”

“Classes tick by in the daily slog, and like all things, lunch eventually comes to pass.”

“I grab a packaged lunch from the omnivore line and begin looking for a place to sit.”

“By now it’s a foregone conclusion, I already know what happens next.”

N “Anon!”

“Right on cue.”

“Naomi rushes over, followed by Naser. I’d really rather not deal with her anymore today.”

N “Come on, Anon, let's continue our conversation from earlier!”

“I need to think of something, and fast.”

A “Err, sorry. I already promised Fang I’d be eating with her.”

“Smooth.”

N “Oh...”

N “Oh!”

N “I’m glad to hear you’re trying to be better friends with Fang!”

Nas “Well hey, this is a welcome surprise!”

A “Right. Actually, she doesn’t eat in the cafeteria, does she?”

Nas “Didn’t she tell you? She hangs out with her band in the auditorium.”

A “She’s allowed to do that?”

N “I’ve asked Principal Spears before, he sees no issue with it.”

A “Huh. Anyways, I uh… Don’t want to keep them waiting!”

Nas “See you.”

N “Have fun!”

A “Right. Bye!”

“I turn away from the two and leave them behind in the cafeteria.”

“...”

“Now that i’m in front of the auditorium when it isn’t crowded for once, I can get a decent look around the foyer.”

“The walls are as vine-covered as anywhere else in the building, but the ones here have small magenta flowers blooming on them here and there.”

“I suppose there’s different kinds of vines, wouldn’t make much sense otherwise.”

“Never really thought about it until now.”

“I peer into the small window in the door to see Fang’s gang lazing about within.”

“Reed is messing with some box on a table, and Fang and Trish are sitting on the first row of seats chattering to each other.”

“I put my hand on the doorhandle and hesitate a bit. Then I pull it open.”

“The squeak of the door echoes through the near empty auditorium, and immediately all three turn their heads and stare.”

“There’s an awkward pause that goes on for just a bit too long. Eventually Fang calls out from her seat.”

F “What the hell are you doing here, dweeb?

A “Hiding from Naomi.”

“Fang throws her head back and goes limp on the shitty wooden chair.”

F “UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUGGHHHHHH, THAT BIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIITCH.”
“...”

A “...”

F “...”

A “...”

“Fang lifts her head back up.”

F “Fffffffine, you can stay.”

“I go sit a few yards away from Fang and Trish on the theater seat. Reed turns back to that device he was messing with before.”

“Looks like a projector?”

A “You don’t like Naomi?”

F “What was your first fuckin’ clue? That stupid bitch, acting all high and mighty all the time.”

T “Hey, Fang.”

F “”Oh look at me I’m super smart and nice to everyone and everyone likes me so if you disagree with me I get the moral high ground no matter what!””

“Fang lets out some combination of a snort and a sigh.”

F “No different than Naser. What a couple.”

F “Ugh, whatever. What was she doing to bother you?”

A “She’s been pestering me about every little thing since school started.”

A “Granted, she’s been a big help in some cases, but jeez she’s overbearing sometimes.”

T “Fang?.”

F “I’ll say. Sometime in the first semester she ended up helping me with a major science project. We only had a day to do the whole thing.”

A “You waited until the last day for a major grade?”

F “It… That doesn’t matter. Shut up.”

F “Anyways, Naomi insisted on helping me, and I just went along with it. She ended up just bossing me around for eight hours.”

T “HEY GUYS DID YOU FORGET I’M HERE TOO?!”

F “Oh, right. What were you talking about Trish?”

“Trish pulls a cardboard tube out of her backpack. She pops the top of the tube open and pulls a rolled up poster out and unfurls it.”

T “This! Tada! Our first poster!”

A “VVURM DRAMA? That’s an… interesting name… and what’s with the date on it?”

F “Trish wants-“

T “We need to have an actual show! Not some dumb school show. We need actual people who matter to show our genius to!”

“Genius? More like retardation.”

F “I don’t know Trish.”

A “Yeeeaaaaahhhh I’m with Fang on this one.”

The glare Trish levels at me was akin to a very dull knife.

T “You don’t even know how good we are!”

A “I mean, I was at your show last week.”

T “And that was ruined by Naser! Right Fang?”

F “Ugh, yeah. If he hadn’t invited all those cocksuckers…”

A “Still I think-“

T “It doesn’t matter what YOU think!”

“Whoa, where did that come from.”

F “Let’s drop it for now. My tuna sandwich is getting cold.”

“Trish grins in victory.”

Re “Dude… ya got told…”

“I finally get to opening my omnivore lunch. A BLT, some chicken nuggets, and an orange.”

“I take my first bite of the sandwich and-”

“*DING-DONG BING-BONG*”

“Are you kidding me.”

“I cram as much of the sandwich into my mouth as I can and close the box.”

“Reed puts the projector in the corner of the room, and Trish makes for the exit with Fang. I follow after, cheeks still filled with food”

“Next class is… Music, that’s right. I’ll be walking with Fang then.”

“The three all wave each other goodbye and Fang turns towards our shared class.”

“May as well make some small talk.”

A “So, uh… What’s your favorite band, Fang?”

F “My favorite band, huh…”

F “Guess it’d be something like The Skinks… Maybe the Fossillies?”

A “‘Oi, tha’ ‘ere’s sum pre’ey bri’ish tayste, yeah?”

F “Pffft.”

“She turns away to hide her snickers.”

F “Shut it.”

F “I’m sure your favorite is much better.”

A “I’m into…”

>>Boomer rock
>>Obscure hipster shit
>>Anime openings and video game OSTs

>>>REGARDLESS OF SELECTION

Fang holds a hand up to her beak.

F “AHAHAHAHAHAHHA. God you are such a dweeb”

“I flash her my biggest shit-eating grin.”

A “Least I don’t need a ‘loisence’ to listen to it.”

F “Oi luv, didn’ share me taystes to get rallied on, bit rewd, innit?”

“The two of us banter with each other with increasingly strong british accents all the way to class.”

“...”

“ARGH!! This stupid-“

“Define a Treble clef? I don’t know what a Treble clef is! I don’t care about this shit, it won’t ever be useful.”

“Fuck this, who can I cheat off of?”

“I lean back in my uncomfortable chair hoping to pop my spine back in place.”

N “Oh! What if you asked Fang for help?

“I crane my head, looking for Fang. At her own desk she’s filling out her assignment page easily, drumming her fingers on her desk. Almost looks like she’s strumming honestly.”

“Agh, and that’s another thing. Who the fuck made guitars?! Fuck trying to memorize frets or whatever the fuck.”

“Oh shit, she’s looking at me now.”

“She tilts her head and taps her sheet.”

“OH!”

“I respond with an eyeroll and finger gun at my temple. My thumb hammer drops and I fake die in my seat.”

“Fang shakes her head, returning to her assignment with a tiny smile gracing her beak.”

“I look at the papers we need to finish. Fuck me, how the hell are we suppose to finish these by the end of class?!”

N “It can’t hurt to ask, though, right?

“Maybe the Neon Nero had a good point.”

“Still, interrupting her now might piss her off.”

“FFFFFfuck. I’ll flip a coin.”

>>> Heads, ask Fang for help
>>> Tails, leave Fang alone

>> Heads, ask Fang for help

“Guess that’s that.”

“May as well get it over with.”

“I slink out of my chair and go around to Fang’s desk.”

A “Uh....”

“She jumps in her chair.”

F “How’d you get- don’t scare me like that!”

A “Sorry…”

“I look at her work and see she’s only a quarter done. Fuck, I hope we have enough time.”

A “sooo… You seem to be capable of deciphering dead languages.”

F “Wha-”

A “canyouhelpmewiththis?!”

F “Help you with the assignment?”

A “....Yes. I don’t get any of this. It’s all moon runes to me.”

F “How’d you even join this class?”

A “Only elective that had an open spot. Even though it’s mid semester and I’m expected to be at the level of everyone that’s been here all year.”

“Fang leans her head down and holds her hand on top of her muzzle.”

“I’m guessing that’s supposed to be like pinching the bridge of your nose.”

F “Whatever, it’s fine if the teacher gives the greenlight.”

Re “It’ll be fine.”

“Fang and I jump several inches.”

F “What are you doing here?!”

A “And what’s with the costume?”

“Reed is in an overly large inflatable T-rex costume.”

Re “Gotta get a signature for this absent note, man…”

Re “Anyways... Mr. Jingo doesn’t care about if you use, like, partners and stuff… He just wants the work done…”

A “I… I see. I didn’t know you were also the school mascot, Reed.”

Re “There’s, like, pockets in here man… You get to bring a lot of cool stuff… As long as you clean it after…”

“I’m not even going to bother at this point.”

F “Thanks, Reed.”

Re “s’all good, man…”

“Reed gets up and goes to the teachers’ desk in the corner of the room.”

“I turn back to Fang expectantly.”

F “I’m not getting up. Get your crap and sit down already.”

A “Thanks.”

“...”

>>>transition to convergence point

>>Tails, leave Fang alone.

“Guess that settles it.”

“Fang wouldn’t want to be bothered right now anyways.”

“Looking back to my paper, I try once again to make sense of the questions and music notes.”

“ “Write the following notes in both Treble and Bass clef.” “

“...What?”

Re “Yo, you should have like... asked Fang for help, man…”

“I have to grab the desk to keep myself from falling out of my chair.”

A “Reed, what the fuck are you doing here?!”

Re “Just getting an absent note signed by teach, man…”

A “And what’s with the outfit?!”

“Reed is in an overly large inflatable T-rex costume.”

Re “School mascots are pretty cool… You wouldn’t believe the things they let you do with these…”

“I’m not going to ask for clarification.”

Re “But, uhh… You should get some help or something…”

Re “I’ll ask the teacher for you…”

A “No, Reed, you don’t have to-”

Re “YO, TEACH! THIS GUY NEEDS SOME EXTRA HELP!”

“All eyes turn to us. The desk makes a nice ‘conk’ sound when my head hits it.”

Mr. Jingo “Does he really?”

Mr. Jingo “Err… Someone… Fang! You help him with the packet.”

“Fang glares daggers at the two of us.”

A “Thanks, Reed.”

Re “Hey, no problem man! I gotta go…”

“Reed shuffles over to the teachers’ desk in the corner to get his signature.”

“Fang calls out from her chair.”

F “I’m not getting up. If you need help grab your stuff and get over here.”

“The damage is done. May as well at this point.”

“...”

>>>Transition to convergence point

>>>>Convergence point

F “Jesus... you suck at this”

A “No shit, I don’t know what half this shit is!”

F “God, they tell you about treble notes in Elementary, it’s E, G, B, D, F for treble and G, B, D, F, A for bass!”

A “How the hell do you know any of this”

“Anon then realized, he is horrendously fucking stupid.”

F “I’ve been into playing music since pre-k”

“... Roll with it”

A “So does it take that long to learn that horrid thing?”

“I point at the class’ electric guitar”

F “Nah, I started with piano. I didn’t get my first guitar ‘til freshman year.”

A “The piano? Isn’t that the hardest one?”

“I have no clue what i'm talking about”

F “maybe for some, but I started early and got ahead. My grandma had an old piano she would let me mess around with.”
F “She would try to get me to play all kinds of songs, mostly church stuff because she wanted me to be a little goodie two shoes like she was. It... was fun.”

F “Then I started taking piano lessons privately because my mom saw that I was interested in it, and in middle school I joined the band for awhile!”

F “Only quit because of marching season, I was not wearing a dumb uniform.”

“Fang gets a strange expression, a mix between a blush and a scowl as she returns back to her snappy attitude.”

F “You done with that yet? It's taking you way too long, rather have you out of my way.”

“Cute.”

“I show her the half-finished worksheet.”

A “I still don’t get this fucking part.”

F “It’s literally three classifications, it’s really easy”

A “It doesn’t list them!”

F “Did you even read the page?”

“Fang then grabs the paper and points at the top right. In a small box is a list of three types, woodwind, brass, and percussion.”

A “Oh...”

F “You need me to still help you with this or do you have it from here?”

“Of course I have it, I know this shit, it's just 3 catagories”

“Percussion is simple enough. Getting the differences between woodwind and brass is a bit harder.”

F “Looks like you got the hang of this bit. Good job, dork.”

“Fang smirks a bit.”

“I see a chance to strike.”

A “Helps to have an actual decent teacher.”

“The slight red tint tells me I was right on the mark.”

“There’s also the steady *thump thump thump* of her tail on the back of her seat to clue me in. I can’t help thinking of tugging on the appendage.”

“Wait, the thumping.”

“*Thump thump… thump thump thump… thump thump… thump thump thump*”

A “Hey uh… Is… Is your tail drumming right now?”

F “Hm? Oh, that. Kinda.”

A “Kinda?”

F “I’m feeling out a rhythm. Thinking of a new song.”

A “Is that normally part of the creative process?”

F “Maybe, maybe not. Are you done with the packet yet?”

“I groan.”

A “Still got half a page left.”

F “That’s just a crossword puzzle. I’m not helping if you can’t do even that.”

A “I know, I know.”

“I have to resort to good ol’ logic to solve the crossword. The longest and shortest words are easy enough to figure out.”

A “But, uhh…”

F “Hm?”

A “Thanks for helping me. With the assignment I mean.”

F “Uhh… Yeah. Sure.”

“There’s that red tint again.”

F “I’ll help again… I mean, if you need it.”

A “Really? Thanks.”

F “Yeah, just-”

“*DING-DONG BING-BONG*”

“That’s the bell telling us to piss off to the last period. Shit, I still got a few words left.”

“I guess the last few words and rush over to the teachers’ desk to turn it in. When I turn back I catch sight of Fang leaving the room in a hurry, tail between her legs.”

Nas “She’s not that bad once you get to know her.”

“Guess he was right after all.”

“...”

4. fang and anon cut class to talk on the roof

Mention in Narration that Fang and Anon are helping each other in classes more often. A few weeks later, Anon is with Fang and her bandmates during lunch when Trish pulls him aside to ask if he's 'done anything' to Fang. Anon naturally declines, although at this point he does have some feelings for Fang. Trish clarifies that Fang hasn’t been responding to anything recently, especially during band practice. Trish is convinced it's Anon's doing. Anon says that he hasn't done anything to make her depressed, but he'll ask when they're alone in class next period. Trish gives Anon the evil eye, but 'lets' him try. Reed finishes messing with the projector and says they can watch stuff during lunch now. Reed asks what they want to watch during Lunch and Anon says Count of Monte Cristo. Reed says he loves that movie, especially the actor of Edmond. Anon agrees and says he likes the VA work too, getting odd looks from Trish and Reed. Fang leaves before the bell rings, so Anon goes to music alone.

Fang doesn't show up to class, so after about 20-30 minutes Anon gets a bathroom pass to go looking for her around campus. He checks both the family restrooms, and

while heading to the auditorium he spots a falling feather outside the window. He dashes up to the roof to see Fang fiddling with her wings. He asks Fang what she's doing up here, and she replies that she's preening, trying to dodge the question. Anon sits about ten feet away, facing Fang when he notices she's crying. He asks what's wrong, to Fang's silence. At this point, Anon gets three sequential choices of whether or not to ask again, with the correct choice being to wait and be silent. Staying silent through all of them has Fang open up about her insecurities on her own, and she's able to articulate them much clearer to Anon. Fang also shares some song lyrics she's come up with about everyone at the high school dying in a meteor crash. While listening, Anon begins to realize his feelings for her. After letting it all out, Anon helps Fang up and her snoot accidentally hits Anon's cheek. Fang laughs it off and apologizes, while anon tries to process it in his head. They return to class and get chewed out by the teacher for being gone so long.

“--February 201M2020 AR--”

“One month now. Five to go and I’ve found myself in a predicament.”

“I’m enjoying my time with Fang.”

“Most of the time just talking about stupid shit.”

“Like our mutual love for wire-fu and comedy movies.”

F/A “We are both ventriloquist, ventriloquist, ventriloquist. We are both ventriloquists and we practice every day.”

F “He carries a basket”

A “He carries a paper roll”

F/A “and we don’t have cysts. But there is one thing that’s for sure friends, we are ventriloquists.”

“Almost every day now I’m either at her desk helping her in Science or working on a lab with her.”

“Or she’s sat next to me decrypting the mystical arts of Not Sucking at Music.”

“I’m talking more with her than anyone I’ve ever talked with.”

“Not to mention lunch and after school. It’s less hiding from the tangerine tyrant and Naser these days and more spending time with Fang. Also Reed’s a bro.”

“Even if he’s constantly checked out.”

“And smells of burnt skunk.”

“The fuck is he on, anyway?!”

Re “It’s carfe, bro…”

“...what?”

Re “Carfentanyl.”

“...”

“Whatever.”

“Fang and the gang (heh) are pretty alright.”

“Trish though…”

“Every day she gives me the same look of distrust and a put-upon sigh.”

“As if I’m some kind of chore to deal with.”

“Whatever. S’not like she matters in the long run.”

“But I find myself having these weird thoughts lately.”

“Like, is any of this real or not?”

“I tumble backwards.”

“Off of the stage.”

“Whoa!”

A “ow…”

Re “bro….. That sucks…..”

“It’s lunch time now, and I guess I dozed off.”

“Too many late night ‘study’ [flash his battle station with the kingdom hearts logo on the screen here] sessions.”

Re “You like… need help?”

A “ffff…. Just fix the projector Reed.”

Re “‘Kay… Almost done…”

“I hobble to my feet, feeling out the bruise blossoming on my shoulder.”

A “Hrrrrg… Stupid fuckin’ stage.”

“I consider jumping back up, but find the stairs up more appealing.”

“Going up the stairs, Trish suddenly grabs my shoulder, pinning it to the wall.”

“She leans in close, looking me dead in the eyes.”

A “Uhh…”

A “Can I help you?”

T “Don’t play dumb.”

T “Something’s up with Fang today.”

“She gestures to where Fang is sitting.”

“Fang’s picking at her lunch with a fork, not eating a bite.”

“Now that I think about it, she has been a bit distant today.”

T “They’ve been like this since band practice yesterday.”

“Wait, what?”

T “Did you do something to them?”

“Do something? What does she mean?”

“Does she think that Fang and I…”

[CG of Anon thinking about sexy Fang here]

T “OI!”

A “What? No! I don’t think at least.”

A “Why are you so concerned?”

A “Everyone has a bad day every now and then, right?”

T “Fang and I have been friends for ten years now.”

T “Not once have I seen them this upset.”

T “You’re the only new thing around here.”

T “It can’t be anyone else.

T “So. What did you do?”

A “I swear I haven’t done anything with Fang.”

A “Look, we’ve got music next. I’ll ask Fang what’s up then.”

“Trish glowers. We both glance at Fang to see her still sitting there with her untouched food.”

T “You’ll talk to Fang? You’ll probably make it worse. I should be the one to talk with them.”

A “So why haven’t you?”

“Trish’s mouth shuts with a click.”

“I stare her down.”

“Her eyes harden and she finally speaks.”

T “...Fine… but you better not fuck up.”

“She lets go of my shoulder, stuffing her hands in her jacket pockets with a huff.”

“I finally return to where I was sitting on the stage to continue finishing my lunch.”

“Right when I plant myself on the ground Reed speaks up.”

Re “Aaaaand… Done!”

A “Done? With the projector?”

Re “That’s right, man… Now we can watch movies… Shows… Pornos… All that.”

T “We’re not watching porn in school.”

A “Not with that attitude…”

“Trish throws an orange slice at me.”

Re “So what do you guys wanna watch…?”

“I can’t think of anything that would be appropriate around normal highschoolers.”

“Trish raises her hand and jumps in place.”

T “How about the Count of Monte Cristo?”

Re “Oh, I know that one! The actors in that one are pretty great…”

A “Oh yeah. I love the VA work.”

“Trish and Reed stop and stare at me.”

T “...”

Re “...”

“Crap, was it something I said?”

T “What-”

“*DING-DONG BING-BONG*”

“Saved by the bell!”

“I look to Fang and-”

“Oh.”

“When did she leave?”

A “Oh, Fang left already. I’ll go catch up with her.”

A “BYE!”

“I make record time out of the auditorium, leaving a still confused Trish and Reed.”

“...”

“Fang isn’t in music class when I get there.”

“I tap out a quick message to her on my phone. I take a spot next to her seat and wait.”

“Maybe she just needed to use the bathroom.”

“...”

“It’s been about twenty minutes.”

“I’m starting to get worried.”

T “Something’s up with Fang today.”

“Hmmm...”

“I looked at my phone, and the message I sent her way just before class started.”

[Phone screen with message here]

A “Hey. Wanna talk?”

“Still unseen?”

“...”

T “you better not fuck up.”

“God damn it.”

A “Mr. Jingo! I need to use the bathroom!”

“...”

“One guitar-shaped bathroom pass later I’m scrambling through the halls.”

“If I were a non-binary teenage pterdactyl having a crisis, where would I hide?”

“Someplace only Fang would go...”

“The family bathrooms!”

“There are only two in the building.”

“I sprint to the first bathroom, closer to the back of the school and nestled away in the special needs area.

“My knuckles rap against the door, locked and preoccupied.”

A “Fang? You’re missing class and I seriously need help with this sheet music.”

(???)St “The one you seek is elsewhere.”

“Who the fuck… Wait…”

A “You’re that weird stego chick…”

St “My name is Stella… And I’m not weird…”

A “Whatever, do you know where Fang is?”

St “...Not here… Can you please leave? I have a nervous bladder.”

“I turn away from the door and sprint to the front of the school where the other bathroom is.”

“It’s while I’m moving briskly through the empty corridors of the school with un-tuned guitar in hand that I find divine providence.”

“Or rather.”

“The feathers floating by the window provide me with the clue I need.”

“I look out the window, and while I can’t look up to see for sure, the shadow that she is casting on the ground below is enough verification required.”

“My feet climb the steps easily, but my mind is ill at-ease.”

“The hell is wrong with me right now.”

“Why do I feel anxious right now?”

T “What did you do?”

“What if I did do something?”

T “Fang and I have been friends for ten years now.”

“I’ve known her for barely a month. And why is it my problem to fix?”

T “Not once have I seen them this upset.”

“I can’t stop the gnawing feeling in my chest.”

“I’m at the door to the roof now. It’s shut, but by the handle I notice a piece of cardboard tucked between the door and frame, keeping the latch open.”

F “Good job, dork.”

“Fang smirks a bit.”

“Damn it all. Fang’s problems first, then I can figure out my chest.”

“I open the door and am immediately blinded by the sun.”

“I shade my eyes.”

“The door clicks shut behind me.”

A “Oh… shit…”

F “Whose the- Anon?... What’s with the guitar?”

“Fang is sitting atop the stair enclosure looking down at me.”

A “Mr. Jingo’s hall pass. I uh… Kinda need help with sheet music again.”

F “Wow. You really suck at music.”

A “Yeah. I really do.”

“I find the ladder easily enough and climb on top of the tiny hut.”

“Around Fang are scattered feathers.”

A “You alright? The feath-”

F “Preening.”

“What.”

“Fang sighs. She holds one of her wings and gently brushes her fingers through the feathers.”

F “I’m preening my wing.”

“She winces. A feather drifts to the floor.”

A “That looks painful.”

“I move closer.”

F “A little.”

“I sit down next to her and look out at Volcaldera Bluff. It’s a beautiful view.”

“It’s a distraction.”

F “You ever…”

>>> All choices will cut to the same section and cut off the rest of Fang’s monologue.
>stay silent
>Interrupt
>>see choice 4b

>Stay silent

“There’s a time to speak and a time to listen.”

F “... You ever feel like you just don’t matter?”

“Fang stares at the vista of Vulcaldera but her eyes are vacant.”

F “I feel like no matter what I do, I’ll only ever be able to make something ‘okay’.”

F “I try and try but nobody likes the ways I express myself creatively.”

F “Is there something wrong with me?”

F “My ability?”

F “The band itself?”

F “Is it just bad luck?”

F “Not once after all the work I’ve put into VVURM DRAMA has anyone ever told me it was good,”

“Her eyes wetten. Her voice roughens. Her shoulders quake.”

F “nobodies ever said ‘Good job, Fang! Can I get a copy of that last song on cd’ .”

F “I’ve been playing music since I was basically in diapers and all I have to show for it is a reputation for sounding like a ritual sacrifice.”

“Her hand curls into a fist. Her nails bite into her palm, and I can clearly see the minute trickle of blood.”

F “How much harder do I have to try to get people to notice!”

“Her fist crashes down on the floor.”

F “Even my own parents!”

F “When they look at me it’s like they just see a lost cause!”

F “ “Oh, Fang is the scene teen, better focus on the one that ISN’T broken so we don’t screw up again!” “

“She punctuated her shouts with her fist, striking the roof beneath her.”

“Her fist lands softly one final time, uncurling to reveal the bleeding grooves her sharp nails have left.”

F “...”

“A part of me wishes to stop her here, just so I can stop her from hurting.”

F “Why can’t I be popular like him?”

“Fang deflates completely. All her anger gone, replaced with melancholy.”

F “Naser doesn’t have to try at all, and just look at him!”

F “That cripple just breezes through life!”

F “Why does he get straight A’s?”

F “Why does he get my parents’ attention?”

F “Why does he get to look down on me?”

F “Why do I have to be the burden on everyone?!”

“She grabs her knees and buries her face in her lap.”

A “...”

>stay silent
>Interrupt
>>see choice 4c
>>Stay silent

F “And the worst part is he can’t even hate me.”

“She picks her head up.”

“Rivulets of tears and orange eyeliner run down her cheeks and leave bright stains on her knees.”

F “I can tell him to piss off every day and he’ll still be there the next as if nothing happened.”

F “He’s a constant reminder of everything I can’t be.”

F “And if I resent someone who’s such a good person, it just means i’m a horrible one.”

F “I’m the villain in this scenario and I never asked to be.”

F “And I can’t just change, just magically get better at everything even if someone like Naser tries to help.”

F “And it’s clear he wants to.”

F “But the sheer difference in us…”

F “It won’t ever happen.”

F “It’s like he’s trying to reach me, steadily closing the gap yet remaining oceans apart.”

“She wipes a tear with one of her hands, but leaves a bloody smudge instead.”

F “Naser knows who he is.”

F “I don’t even know what I am.”

A “...”

“Do I step in now…?”

>stay silent
>Interrupt
>>see choice 4d

>>Stay silent

F “WHO AM I, DAMN IT?!”

F “I can only define myself by the thing’s I’m not.”

F “I’m not a good band player.”

F “I’m not a good sibling.”

F “I’m not a good friend.”

F “I’m not a good person.”

F “My mind is a fucking mess. In my head it’s all…”

F “My thoughts… they’re all fucking foggy. Half the time I’m hating myself.”

F “‘Am I who I say I am?’ Maybe? Not really…”

F ”The other half I’m daydreaming of being something special.”

F “That I’m different from everyone. Above them… I know more than them.”

F “I know they’re both lies. I’m fuckin’ lying to myself but…”

F “It’s like I’m just here to be a drain on myself and others.”

F “I’m stuck with myself, I can’t just drop everything and try other things now.”

F “It’s just too late for that.”

F “There’s too many ways to mess up, too many wrong turns.”

F “Music is the only thing I’ve ever been decent at, and even then…”

“She looks to me desperately, at a loss for words.”

“...”

>stay silent
>Interrupt
>see choice 4e

>>Stay silent

“She’s almost there.”

F “...”

F “Why won’t you say anything?”

F “Here I am begging for guidance and you haven’t said a word!”

F “You’re always so sure of yourself, yet here you are listening to me in a crisis and you can’t say anything?”

“Fang grips my jacket by the bicep with both hands, digging in.”

“I need to deal with it for now.”

F “What is it you have that I don’t?!”

F “What is it you want from me?!”

F “What is it I want from you?!”

F “When you got here a few weeks ago you were just some nobody kid without friends who lives alone on financial assistance!”

“She’s shaking my arm around.”

F “And now everyone I know is acquainted with you!”

F “You have no talents, no specific knowledge anywhere, no real personality…”

F “WHAT IS IT WITH YOU THAT YOU CAN LACK AN IDENTITY BUT KNOW EXACTLY WHO YOU ARE?!”

“Honestly I…”

A “dunno”

F “...What…”

A “I dunno how to say it. All I know is I’m me…”

F “You’re… You?”

“I struggle to find the right words.”

“Fang stares pleadingly. Eventually she buries her eyes in my jacket arm.”

A "It's like you can't force your own ego.”

A “It needs to happen naturally.”

“Fang looks up from my arm.”

F “Naturally…?”

A “If you are forcing it then it's usually out of a fear of the unknown, a refusal to leave the comfort zone”

A “I ended up trying to be someone else too.”

A “To the point that I rejected who I really was and started to fuck myself up.”

A “I’m not about making others' notice me, or about being great at something.”

A “I just do what makes me, well, me.”

A “I'm the only me here, and I think it's safe to assume that there's several of you. Like, you don’t know, you said it yourself.”

“Her fingers tighten around my arm.”

“I’m not certain she’s breathing right now.”

A “And there’s tons of different people going through what you are right now, trying to force their egos, only to reject who they really are.”

A “Not to undermine your feelings or anything.”

A “And at the end of it all, I’ve accepted that ‘I’ am, and will always be, ‘me’.”

A “Ya see?”

F “I have to… Figure it out myself…?”

“Fang’s grip loosens.”

“She puts her hands around her knees and lowers her head.”

“Her expression is one of complete resignation.”

F “I don’t… I can’t do anything on my own.”

F “How am I supposed to do something like this?”

A “You aren’t alone.”

A “I’m here. Reed and Trish are here. You already know Naser wants to help.”

F “...”

A “It doesn’t need to be all at once.”

“Fang looks back to me and gives a sad smile.”

F “... Alright…”

“She tries to dry her tears again, only to smudge her face with blood and makeup again.”

“I remove my jacket and offer the sleeve to her.”

“She sniffles, then grabs it to wipe her eyes.”

“...It’s laundry day anyways.”

“After returning my jacket, Fang looks to me again with a somber smile.”

A “Why did you come up here?”

F “It’s nice up here. Quiet.”

A “But why? And why alone?”

F “To think. Maybe to throw myself a pity party. I do this every year.”

A “Up here?”

F “Nah… Just somewhere I can be alone.”

A “Every year though?”

F “... Since I was 11…”

A “Jeez. What happened?”

F “I broke Naser’s wing.”

“Ah. My foot tastes extra salty today.”

F “I was supposed to watch him. I’m his big sister after all.”

F “He had asked me if we could really fly.”

“Fang stretched her wings to highlight that.”

F “I said ‘of course’... I looked away for a second and then it happened…”

F “My baby brother, just 9 years old, had jumped off the bluff, thinking he could fly!”

“Fang’s eyes grow wet again. Without a second thought I draw her into a hug, comforting her.”

“Her voice is muffled by my jacket but she continues.”

F “I’m why his wing is a fucking mess. I did it…”

F “So why…”

F “Why doesn’t he hate me…”

Nas “She’s still family.”

A “Because you’re his sister.”

“Fang flinches in my arms, but doesn’t pull away.”

A “You’re the one that’s hurting, Fang. Not Naser.”

“I surprised myself there. I honestly don’t know how I managed this conversation.”

“I let go of Fang and lean back, giving her some space. Her breathing is evening out, and she looks far more composed now.”

>>choice 4b

“She seems at a loss for words.”

“I should say something.”

A “You’re feeling helpless, right?”

A “Like you don’t matter?”

“Fang looks at me with desperation.”

F “Y...Yes…”

A “Here’s what I think…”

>>move to bad choice convergence

>>choice 4c

“Here’s a good place to butt in.”

A “You aren’t a burden to me.”

“Fang removes her head from her knees and looks to me with pleading eyes.”

F “What?”

A “I’m your friend too, right?”

A “I don’t think you’re a burden.”

“Fang sniffles a bit.”

A “Here’s what I think…”

>>move to bad choice convergence

>>choice 4d

“Now’s a good time.”

A “You’re Fang.”

“She looks to me with tears streaming down her cheek.”

A “Even if you don’t see it, you’re still you.”

A “The Fang I know likes music, bad movies, and doesn’t take crap from any adults.”

A “Am I right?”

“Fang nods slowly.”

A “Here’s what I think…”

>>move to bad choice convergence

>>choice 4e

“Here we go.”

A “It’s never too late to try something new.”

F “...I can’t.”

F “I just can’t.”

A “You have support from me and Naser, right?”

F “...”

F “...Maybe...”

A “Here’s what I think…”

>>move to bad choice convergence

>>bad choice converge

“I put my arm on Fang’s shoulder.”

A “You’re in a pretty bad spot right now.”

A “Self-improvement is hard, but there’s nothing to be gained without sacrifice, right?”

“Fang gives a slight nod.”

A “You need to step out from your comfort zone more often, even if you think there’s no time.”

A “There’s no harm in diversifying, right?”

“Fang looks away from the coastline and to me.”

F “... I don’t know. Maybe you’re right...”

A “You could also try harder to get along with Naser.”

A “I guarantee there’s not that much in the way between you two.”

F “...You’ll be there to support me, right?”

A “Sure.”

F “I don’t know if I’m strong enough to do all that…”

A “I believe you can be.”

A “Being weak is nothing to be ashamed of.”

A “Staying weak is.”

A “You don’t have to do it alone.”

“Fang embraces me tight.”

F “Thank you.”

“We sit in silence for a few minutes.”

“..”

“...”

“....”

“Eventually, she lets go.”

“Fang’s breathing is evening out, and she looks far more composed now.”

>>>Convergence point
F “Hey, can I see that?”

“Fang points at my oversized hall pass.”

A “Yeah, sure”

“She takes it from my hands, our fingers brushing for a second.”

“She blushes while she handles the acoustic bathroom pass.”

F “I think… I think I finally got the tune, Anon.”

A “Tune?”

“She finishes tuning the guitar and tests it. With a nod to herself Fang begins strumming.”

“The rhythm is slow and the tone is soft, enough so that her humming blends perfectly with it.”

“I lean back, bobbing my head along to the impromptu music.”

“The streaks from her tears that had once marred her pretty face only help the highlight her soft smile now.”

“I hum along now too, which causes Fang to giggle. The rhythm is slowing to a crawl, the song about to end.”

F “With a meteor coming soon
Everyone’s going to die
So I’ll say to everyone
Goodbye Volcano High”

“The lyrics surprise me, but I shrug it off.”

A “You ready to get up?”

“Fang nods and wipes her tears one last time with her forearm.”

“I stand and pop my back, looking out over the fence at the ground below.”

“From here I can see the afternoon sun starting to encroach on the skyline of the small coastal town.”

“Turning to Fang, I crouch a bit and extend my hand to her.”

“She moves her bloody hand to take it, but hesitates.”

“...”

“...”

“She softly grasps my hand.”

“She winces in pain.”

“You know…”

“It’s strange, I expected the alarms to go off again, but…”

“This feels different, somehow.”

“More natural.”

“I’m careful to hoist her to her feet. Mindful of her injured palm. But her beak accidentally bumps into my cheek on her way up.”

“Ah, there they are.”

“Fang’s eyes contact and she instinctively hops backwards, covering her muzzle with her hands and turning her head away in her flusteration.”

“I clench my lower jaw and look at my palm, slick with sweat and her blood.”

“The silence continues for an immeasurable amount of time.”

A “Haha… So that’s how dinos kiss… Haha…”

[Internal screaming sfx here]

“FUCKFUCKFUCKFUCKFUCKFUCKFU-”

F “Haha… not really haha… haha…”

A “Ha ha… haaaa… uh…”

“I look for something, anything, to end this awkwardness.”

“Like the guitar hall pass. Wait…”

“I check my phone, seeing that Mr. Jingo’s class will be ending in 10 minutes.”

A “Fuck… the assignment…”

“Fang finally looks my way again, though her face is still flush.”

F “What?”

A “Mr. Jingo’s assignment. There’s no way in hell I’ll be able to do it at home.”

F “Pfffft.”

“Fang’s hands try to cover her beak, failing horribly to contain her giggles.”

F “Heheheheheehe. God, you really suck at music.”

“I glare at her.”

F “haaaaah... Why don’t you just drop it? It’s an elective anyway.”

“Because I need to maintain my GPA for college.”

A “Because… I kinda like it…”

“I blush and look down to the entrance of the roof below us.”

F “Hmm… maaaaybe I’ll help you…”

“Fang hops down, her wings easing her landing.”

F “I owe you for the fuckin’ therapy session anyway.”

A “Oh thank fuck.”

“I climb down the ladder. Those wings must be really convenient.”

Sp “WHO THE FUCK IS UP HERE!”

“The door flies open, off its hinges, through the suicide fence and over the side of the building, crashing loudly on the concrete below.”

Sp “I KNOW SOMEONE IS DITCHING UP HERE! MY HUNTING INSTINCTS CAN TELL!”

“Oh double fuck.”

A “Uh…”

Sp “YOU!”

“Principal Spears looks at us, finger pointed at me as if to fire a special beam cannon through my chest.”

Sp “In all my god damned years… On top of the roof! Explain. NOW!”

“Bullshit mode activate.”

A “I got lost looking for the bathroom?”

“Spears incinerates me on the spot.”

F “Estrus season?”

“For a brief instant I picture Fang in a bikini.”

“Hot.”

“Fang gets a similar stare and withers down.”

Sp “I’m not stupid. Ptero estrus season isn’t for another few months.”

Sp “Empty your pockets. Now.”

“I reduce myself to hoover flags. All I had on me was my phone and a ratty wallet held together with hot glue and duct tape.”

“Fang does the same, dropping her own phone, a spare guitar pick, and an unopened pack of cigarettes.”

“Spears looks at Fang dead in the eyes, rips the package open, and stuffs every cigarette in his mouth at once.”

“To our mortified stares, he chews them until they are a brown glob and spits it over the fence, landing on a rather oriental looking car.”

Sp “Anon. Go to class. Now. Fang. To the Nurse’s.”

“I look to Fang one last time. She looks a mess.”

“Her wings are ragged, feathers misaligned and a clear patch of them missing on one.”

“Stains on her legs from her make-up, tears and blood.”

“Drying blood on her hands, arms and beak.”

“Eyes puffy and red from crying.”

“But her smile… was…”

“I wave her goodbye and wordlessly return to class.”

“I only have a few minutes, but I can’t focus on the assignment. I’ll have to take it home as homework.”

F “Hmm… maaaaybe I’ll help you…”

“I take out my phone and consider messaging Fang again.”

“!”

“My heart thumps roughly in my chest. Just what is with me today.”

“All this drama… When did my life become a soap opera…”

“Heh… even included a dramatic kiss…”

“I look at my hand, her blood now dried and dusty on my palm.”

“Did… That count as a kiss?”

“I mean, it was unintentional. She backed off and all.”

“...”

“Jeez, my insides feel like liquid.”

“Surely that’s just my disgusted reaction to Spear’s scare tactic up there.”

“Nah, this isn’t fear. Unlike a bottomless pit the feeling is...”

“Pleasant…”

“Yeah, I kinda like it. Hmmmm…”

“I wonder if Fang-”

“!”

“The feeling intensifies. But why? I only thought of-”

“It’s not as if she-”

“But-”

“...”

“Do I like Fang?”

“!!!!!!”

“...”

“Fuck.”

“...”

5. anon helps fang find a venue for band

A month later Anon is laying in bed on a saturday morning when he gets a text from Fang asking him for help finding a new venue for a show. Trish had a horn appointment and Reed is probably staring at the back of his hands in a bathroom corner. Anon goes to Fangs house and ends up talking to Naser while Fang gets ready. The rest of Fang's family treats Anon as if he's taking Fang on a date, much to his flusteration Naomi is also present, and slyly suggests a double date, which the parents agree to. Mention Fang's dad has a handgun and is an officer. Fang finishes getting ready and they go out looking for a venue for several hours.

After searching fruitlessly for several hours they come into contact with Naomi and Naser, apparently on a date as well, and Naomi insists they make it a double-date. Naser ends up talking briefly with Fang while walking, and Naomi pulls Anon aside to ask him intrusive questions on the mental wellbeing of Fang. Make it readily apparent that Naomi purposefully put Anon with Fang with the intent of 'fixing' her. Anon catches on, and realizes he's basically doing Naomi's bidding the whole time. Anon gets the choice to call her out now or stay silent, with the correct choice being to stay silent. If this choice is made, he then has to break off the group, and has to ask Naser to break off or Fang to. The correct choice is Fang, as Anon will say it's to cover more ground (half-truth). Fang then gets Naomi and Naser to break off on her own, accepting her brother a bit. Choosing to approach Naser has him break off on his own without Fang making any choice of her own. Picking to call Naomi out has Naser and Naomi leave, and Anon tells Fang it was just to get them away when confronted.

After searching for a while longer, they stop at a pizza place to eat. Anon starts to warm up to the date nature of the relationship. Fang seems a bit demotivated, and Anon tells her it wasn't a total waste of time, since they got pizza and they still got to spend time together. Anon talks with the owner and is able to smoothtalk him into letting them use the place as a venue. Elated, Fang pecks Anon

on the cheek. Spaghetti explodes from both parties. Nervous laughter, more spaghetti. They return to Fang's place, and Anon admits to himself that it was a date when the parents ask him how it went.

(note: put detail in background of cg's that it's valentine's day)

“-One Month Later-”

“I’m laying in bed on a saturday morning.”

“It’s been raining the last few days, so I’m stuck inside.”

“Not like I had any other plans anyways.”

“The forecast says it should clear up later today.”

“There’s no new games out, and my backlog is just the perfect size of fuck that noise.”

“I don’t even feel like baiting on a certain basket weaving polynesian forum.”

“The light of my phone is the only thing illuminating my hovel of a home.”

“I scroll through the camera roll out of boredom.”
“At least that’s what I tell myself.”

“Interspersed through various memes and screenshots of homework assignments are pictures Fang has been sending.”

“Over the last month I’ve been included more in Fang’s circle of friends.”

[CG of Fang having beaten Anon on a Primal Rage arcade cabinet]
“Ugh… My cred… I can feel it slipping away.”

[CG of Reed in his mascot outfit at one of Naser’s track meet]
“Hehehehe, Reed stole all the hotdogs that day.”

[CG of a selfie of Trish and Fang on the pier]
“I scroll past that one swiftly… god damn it Trish…”

“My perusal through old pictures is interrupted with a text.”

“Fang: Looking for new band venue”

“Fang: Don’t feel like going alone”

“Fang: Do you want to come with?”

“

“...Alone…?”

“No, shut the fuck up alarms.”

“Anon: Why alone?”

“Fang: Trish has a horn appt and Reed is”

“A pause.”

“Fang: Preoccupied.”

#cut to Reed in bathroom cg

Re “...dude like… back to the story...”

#cut back to Anon

“Anon: Alright, where we dropping?”

“Fang: Just show up at my place in like an hour”

“Fang: Need to go now”

“Anon: k”

“This is fine.”

“It’s just helping a friend of mine find someplace for her band to play.”

“A friend I have feelings for.”

“And we’re alone.”

“JUST HANGING OUT CALM DOWN ANON CALM THE FUCK DOWN.”

“I boot up my computer and start a gacha thread on a taiwanese rum brewing blogsite.”

“The soothing replies bring my heartbeat down to an acceptable level.”

“To top it off I insult the mods and then report my own post so I know they have to see it.”

“I am become Anon, Collector of (You)s and Poster of Shit.”

“By now the rain has subsided.”

“Still feeling refreshed, I grab my jacket and start making my way across town to Fang’s house.”

“...”

“Passing through the snobby part of town to catch a bus, my thoughts begin intruding on me.”

“Images of what’s to come pass before my eyes unwarranted.”

“Looking for restaurants… because they’d be good venues of course!”

“Walking through the mall maybe? That’d be a good spot.”

“The day turns to night and the temperature drops.”

“I offer Fang my coat and-”

“God damn it no this isn’t a daaa-”

“Oh shit my stop!”

“I scurry off the bus right as the doors are closing.”

“And I don’t forget to thank the driver.”

“The bus stop is luckily only a block away from Fang’s neighborhood.”

“There’s a few stores open, and a street vendor is gleefully setting up shop for the first time in a few days..”

“He calls out to me as I pass.”

Street Vendor “Some storm, eh?”

A “Oh, uh… Yeah. It was.”

Street Vendor “People don’t usually take the bus here these days, where ya headed?”

A “Just… Over to the suburbs over there.”

Street Vendor “Highschooler, taking the bus to the suburbs on a saturday…”

Street Vendor “You’re going to see a girl, ain’tcha?”

A “How did…”

A “I mean, I am, but… I-it isn’t like that, you know?”

Street Vendor “WAH-HA!! I’m certain it ain’t.”

Street Vendor “At any rate, why not pick up a few ‘dogs to impress her?”

Street Vendor “We got ice cream too, if she’s an herbie.”

A “Maybe later. I’ll keep it in mind.”

“I turn to leave, behind me I hear the vendor mutter to himself.”

Street Vendor “Ah, to be young and love again…”

“... I pick up the pace.”

“...”

“The difference between Fang’s neighborhood and my apartment complex is night and day.”

“The smell of burnt tires doesn’t hang in the air. Instead it’s a mix of Cedar and wet pavement.”

“The knife in my pocket feels excessive as an officer’s car passes by.”

“I suppose to someone who's lived here it would seem normal, but to someone from bumfuck nowhere? The suburb felt decadent.”

“Fang’s home is easy enough to find thanks to Gruugle maps’ images.”

“It’s nice. Very nice actually. Two stories tall and with an expensive, if kinda scraped up, sports car in the drive-way.”

“I approach the home, careful to hop up the spread stones that make up the walkway, in fear of trampling the well manicured yard.”

“At last I’m at my destination. Fuck.”

“I stand frozen on the white porch now with the front door before me like the ramparts of a castle.”

“Am I supposed to knock, or text her that I’m here?”

“Crap, I’ve never done anything like this before.”

“Go with a friend to find a venue for a band, that is.”

“Before my knuckles reach the door it swings open.”

“What is this killing intent?!”

FangDad “Hm… You Anon?”

“Shitshitshitalarms shut the fuck up right now please I need to think.”

A “Y-yeah, I’m Anon. P-pleased to m-meet you uh…”

FangDad “Executioner.”

“My pants feel heavy and sodden.”

FangMom “Honey, who is it?”

FangMom “OH! You must be Anon!”

FangMom “Come in come in!”

“The petite ptero-matriarch drags me into her abode. I could see the patriarch’s jaw clench as Fang’s mother pushed me into the comfiest couch to ever exist.”

FangMom “Oh you must forgive my little Lucy, she’s still getting ready for your date!”

“Oh god I can feel iron-sights on my back.”

“While she spoke a mile a minute I managed to catch some of the words. I ignored the latter, because this ISN’T a daaaa-”

“Isn’t THAT!”

“But-”

A “Ah, it’s uh, no trouble ma’am.”

A “But uh… I thought her name was Fang.”

“She titters at that, holding a hand over her sly smile.”

FangMom “Oh that? My little tooth fairy always loves to re-invent herself.”

“Her eyes gloss over as she’s pulled into her own memories.”

FangMom “One moment she was the prettiest princess pirate, and now she’s some sort of rock and roll maestro! The imagination she has…”

Nas “Sup buddy.”

“I look across the coffee table to see Naser reclined in an equally plushy couch.”

Nas “You good?”

“I breathe deeply, collecting my scrambled thoughts into a semi-coherent state.”

A “I’m good… So uh… nice place.”

“I look at the walls of the room, what little white I could see that wasn’t covered by the myriad of family photos.”

“Huh… She really was a princess pirate at some point…”

N “Home is where the heart is, as they say.”

“SWEET RAPTOR JESUS ON THE CROSS!”

“Oh… is that a sin to think that with that cross hung behind Naser’s head?”

“I look back to see the Cream Queen of the Kremlin, a tray of the smallest cups I’ve ever seen in her arms.”

N “Naser! Your mother made us some tea! Oh isn’t she the most wonderful woman!”
Nas “Bleh… She knows I’m not a fan of that hot leaf juice…”

“Naomi navigates around the couch and coffee table, setting the tray of treats and tea before us.”

N “Would you like some, Anon?”

A “I’ll pass, thanks.”

“Something’s not right with what just happened.”

“I look back to where Naomi was standing.”

“The entire opposing wall is covered in various hunting trophies.”

“Two bears, a whole school of fish, a falcon, two deers…”

“And a rhinoceros.”

“... I may have made a huge mistake.”

“The loveseat to the right of me scrapes forward into my field of view.”

“Fang’s father leans back, carefully examining and polishing a golf club.”

“Maybe I can turn his trophies into a conversation piece.”

“Extend an olive branch, so to speak.”

A “What gun did you use to hunt these?”

FangDad: “Gun?”

“My hands fold into my lap and I stare a million yards into the wall clock ahead of me.”

FangDad: “So… Anon, was it?”

FangDad: “You a big fan of Golf?”

“Naser dons a similar pose.”

A “I’ve played minigolf before…”

FangDad: “That’s a good start, a good start…”

FangDad: “Nothing beats the real thing, though.”

FangDad: "You ever play golf before, boy?"

“Don't say Wii Golf don't say Wii Golf don't say Wii golf”

A: "N-no, not on a proper green before."

“Nailed it.”

FangDad: "Well, this is my favorite club right here. A 9 Iron.”

“He finishes polishing the head of the club and rotates it ever so slightly so I see my reflection in the metal.”

FangDad: "Now, Irons are by far the most common, and most useful out of your standard club set. Anywhere you need an extra...push, the Iron will do."

“His gaze makes its way from the club to me as he lays it across his lap. I gulp and sink back into the couch in an attempt to hide among the cushions.”

FangDad: "Of course, this is all due to the solid steel construction, and your own efforts.”

FangDad: “With the right quality club and technique, you can almost feel the ball cleaving in twain when you strike it…”

FangDad: “And I assure you, Anon, that my equipment is of the highest quality, and my technique is impeccable."

“Fang’s father stands up, stepping on top of the sturdy coffee table. His club is lined up, and I can see my reflection in the impromptu ball.”

“With well-practiced motions he demonstrates a perfect swing in the middle of a living room. I can practically feel the air slice in half as an image of the impossibly large pteradon stands over me with the club flashes momentarily.”

“Fang’s father laughs heartily, setting the murder tool aside as he reclaims his throne.”

N “What fine form sir!”

FangMom “Dear!”

“Fang’s father flinches.”

FangMom “How many times have I told you about intimidating suitors! This is the first boy our little Tooth Fairy has brought home!!”

FangDad “What about Reed?”

“The father shrunk under the patented mother’s leer.”

FangMom “You know that boy isn’t right, dear.”

“I feel a smidgen of sympathy, but keep quiet to avoid similar treatment from her.”

F “Oh my god Mom! Not in front of my friends!”

“Fang is at the foot of the stairway, frustration clear on her face.”

“I look to Fang with hands clasp together, silently pleading.”

N “Oh! Are you ready for your date now?”

“I lurch in my seat at that.”

A “Ah, nah nah! We’re just-””

F “N-no! We need to find a venue!”

FangMom “Just you two though?”

“Oh god no. Please, Raptor Jesus, I promise I’ll sacrifice a goat if you end this.”

N “Why don’t we have a double date then!”

“...God, why have you abandoned me…?”

“Buddha be a bro please!”

FangMom “I agree! Naser and Naomi can accompany you!”

“I am going to personally commit mass deicide.”

FangDad: “I agree.”

“He looks me dead in the eyes.”

FangDad “More people means you’re less likely to do something reckless, after all.”

Naser “I dunno, I don’t think Fang would appreciate-”

“Fang’s father puts his arm around Nasers’ shoulder and pulls him aside.”

FangMom “You’d love going with your brother, right Fang?”

F “Absolutely not.”

F “I’m perfectly able to find somewhere to play without anyone’s help.”

F “Especially his.”

FangMom “Come now, how many opportunities in your youth will you get to spend time all together like this?”

F “Hopefully none.”

FangMom “Aww, but you used to always spend time with little Naser…”

“Her eyes gloss over again.”

FangMom “Like all those times you used to bathe together.”

Fang “Mooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooom!”

“Fang’s Father gives a loud pat on Naser’s back and he returns to the conversation.”

Nas “Yes, I think a group date is an excellent idea.”

Nas “We should all go together.”

“Naser’s shaking like a leaf in a monsoon in the middle of an earthquake with a meteor hanging overhead.”

F “It’s not happening.”

FangDad “It is.”

“Fang and her dad lock eyes.”

“The tension in the room mounts as the staredown draws on.”

“The moment long eternity finally ends though.”

“Eventually Fang flops her head back in defeat.”

F
“Fffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffine.”

F “Let’s just get out of here, Anon.”

“Gladly.”

“Naomi gives a little cheer and tugs the still catatonic Naser by the arm out the door.”

“I give a polite goodbye to Fang’s Mother.”

“I extend a hand to Fang’s father and-”

“The eight bones of my palm are squeezed together, being ground into dust under the immense strength.”

“The five bones joining my fingers to my palm threaten to splinter from the powerful grip.”

“The rest of my bones in my hand try to separate from the vicious shake that Fang’s father ends it with.”

“By the time I get outside everyone else is getting into the fancy and beat up car from before.”

“Guess it was Nasers’.”

N “Come on, Naser! The day is still young!”

“Naser, still mentally fried, is being goaded by Naomi into driving to the city.”

“Eventually, he robotically enters the drivers’ seat.”

“Naomi ecstatically shoots into the shotgun seat.”

“Fang and I take the back seats.”

“Now that we’re getting this shitshow on the road, I should probably clarify with Fang about precisely what sort of venue she wants.”

“The split second I move my hand towards Fang to ask Naser chucks his jacket between us with lightning speed.”

Nas “Whups, look out back there! Haha!”

“The look of pants-shitting fear on his face betrays his jovial tone.”

“Poor guy.”

A “A-anyways, Fang.”

“She looks over.”

A “What sort of place are we supposed to be looking for?”

“Fang looks away for a minute with a finger under the end of her beak.”

“Is that supposed to be a thinking pose?”

F “Some wide open space where people can stand or sit.”

F “Preferably with a mosh pit.”

N “Oh, I know lots of places like that!”

A “Where?”

N “They’re at the Gold Fern Galleria in the downtown shopping district!”

F “No.”

N “Why ever not?”

F “I’m not going to play around the ritzy area.”

F “There’s more stuck up assholes there than at school!”

“Naomi shrugs and turns back to Naser.”

N “In that case, we should just park in the middle of the city and work our way around.”

F “...Sure. That’s fine.”

N “What do you think, Anon?”

“I look at Fang. She’s preoccupied with watching the buildings fly past us.”

“I shrug.”

N “Alright then, to the city we go!”

“Naomi turns the radio on, shattering my ears with the most nauseatingly upbeat love-song on max volume.”

“I’m left to retch as the song violates my virgin ears with it’s too cheery tune.”

“--30 Excruciating Minutes Later--”

“In the city proper now I find myself with a new dilemma.”

“The group slowly makes its way down the sidewalk.”

“Naser walks ahead and continues to look back at me, his expression anxious and worried.”

“Fang refuses to speak and gives everyone and everything a vicious sneer.”

“And Naomi just.”

“Won’t.”

“Shut the fuck up.”

N “OH OH OH HOW ABOUT HERE! IT’S SO SPACIOUS AND THE FOOD IS TO DIE FOR- OOOOH I LOVE THAT RESTAURANT MAYBE WE CAN ASK THEM- OH AND THEN THERE’S THIS NICE CAFE AND THEY EVEN HAVE A PIANO-”

“God this marmalade monster needs to die.”

N “OH. MY. GOSH! It’s PERFECT!”

“Naomi stops the group before a large glass window. Past it is a large open room sparsely filled with miniscule round tables with candelabras set atop them.”

Nas “Isn’t this a bit too…”

“Ostentatious.”

F “Gaudy.”

N “No way! It’s wide open! The tables can be rearranged to provide ample room for your audience!”

“Fang looks unimpressed.”

N “Come on, let’s go ask!”

“The saurolophus wraps her arms around Naser’s and bodily drags him to the entrance.”

F “Fuck me…”

“Shutthefuckupbrain.”

A “Ten dollars we get kicked out.”

F “No deal. You’re stating an inevitability, not a possibility.”

“We follow behind the pair to find Naomi pestering the Maitre D’ for possible arrangements, cringing as the poor man just stares off into the middle distance while Naomi prattles on obliviously.”

N “-And if possible could you include maybe a dinner ticket option for-”

“The Maitre D’ looks towards us, or rather, Fang, and scowls.”

Maitre D “Our esteemed establishment caters exclusively to those with an appreciation for fine culture, culinary and otherwise.”

Maitre D “Might I recommend that you vacate the premises at once, or will you be requiring an escort?”

A “Where’s my ten bucks?”

F “Up your ass, I told you no deal.”

“Naser tugs a bit at Naomi’s arm, and she stomps back to the entrance in a huff with him following.”

N “Hmph! Fang, I’ve decided this place isn’t good enough!”

“Sure.”

Nas “Don’t be mad Naomi, he isn’t worth getting upset about.”

F “Nah, he’s worth it. If it were me and the band they’d have one less tire on all their cars.”

“Naser raises an eyebrow back at Fang.”

“She responds with a smirk and a middle finger.”

“...”

“We’ve been searching for a place for at least two hours now.”

“Fang is barely holding herself together, judging from her angry muttering.”

“A lot of muttering. Mostly including words like murder, knives, and particular genitals as pin cushions, with profanity taking up a good half of what escaped her beak.”

“I could see a blood vessel throbbing on her temple. This didn’t look good.”

“I position myself slightly behind Fang, putting her between me and Naomi.”

A “Hey Naomi, I got an idea!”

“Naomi spins on her heel towards the sound of my voice, and the giant grin on her stupid snout stiffens as she sees Fang’s looming aneurysm.”

N “Maybe we should take a little break.”

“...”

“Luckily there’s a small park nearby.”

“The four of us grab some drinks from a vending machine.”

“Fang and I grab a knockoff brand of soda, Naomi got a bottle of water, and Naser bought a sports drink.”

“We’re lucky to find an unoccupied picnic table with some shade, because the afternoon sun has turned the cool day into a sweltering hot one.”

“Thank you, coastal weather.”

“We sit in near silence aside from Nasers’ audible chugging of his sports drink.”

“He crushes the bottle in one hand and tosses it into a trash can five yards away, then looks to us with the smuggest grin to ever be seen on a beak.”

A “Showoff.”

Nas “Yes.”

N “Great shot, Naser!”

Nas “Of course it was, babe.”

“Fang mock retches into the grass.”

Nas “At any rate, I need to drain the snake.”

“What.”

“Naser turns and gives a brief wave back to us, and makes his way to the public restroom on the other side of the park.”

N “Aww, his double-entendres are always so clever!”

“Fang slaps a hand over her eyes.”

F “I need to go too.”

N “Why? Something the matter?”

F “Monthly problems.”

N “Do you have everything you need?”

N “I have some extras stocked!”

N “I have regular, plastic, scented…”

N “Oh, what diameter do-”

F “Shut up now.”

“Fang stomps away to the bathroom, leaving just the apricot asspain”

“...And me.”

N “Do you need to use the restroom as well, Anon?”

“How tempting.”

A “Well, now that you mention it, I-”

N “Since it’s just the two of us, I’ve been wanting to ask for a while.”

N “How have things been going with Fang? Has she been well? Is there anything wrong?”

--Pointless decision. Only here for retards that don’t understand subtlety
>>Fine, I guess?
>>Shouldn’t Naser know?

A “...Fine, I guess?”

N “Just ‘fine’ Anon? Are you sure?”

“There’s something in her tone of voice.”

A “...Are you implying something?”

“Naomi smiles sweetly but there’s a wicked glint in her eyes.”

N “Well you were so nervous this morning. And you haven’t been saying much on this double date.”

“I feel my cheeks heat up.”

A “I-it isn’t a date! I’m just helping the band out is all!”

N “But you want it to be a date.”

“Her statement catches me off-guard.”

N “I know the date hasn’t been going to well so far-”

A “It isn’t a date, Naomi!”

N “But I’m sure I can help you sweep that girl off her feet-”

A “wha-”

N “You’ve been doing a great job so far, all she needs is a little more-”

A “STOP.”

“The bottle in my hand is a crumpled mess, spilling fizzly liquid across my white knuckles.”

A “What. Did. You. Do.”

N “Me?”

“Naomi titters into her hand.”

“Her serpentine green eyes harden.”

N “Nothing.”

A “Bullshit. You were the one to pull this double date shit. What the hell did you do.”

N “Hmmm…I did… Poor Fang needs all the help she can get after all.”

“I’m ready to lunge across this table.”

N “Why, all I ever hear from my dear sweet Naser is how sad Fang is.”

N “How depressed Fang is.”

N “How lonely Fang is.”

N “Fang Fang Fang Fang.”

“She meets my glare with her own.”

N “All the time.”

N “So.”

N “I decided to fix her.”

A “‘Fix’ her?!”

N “Oh, how simple a maiden’s heart is.”

N “All she really needs is someone in her life.”

N “To deal with her problems for her.”

N “To make her feel loved.”

N “You’ve been doing a wonderful job so far, Anon.”

A “And if I didn’t? What if I were to leave right now?”

N “And leave Fang here by herself?”

“...”

“Fucking bitch”

N “Ah, it’s written all over your face.”

N “I knew you two losers would be a match made in heaven.”

>>>Pointless convergence point here--

>>Shouldn’t Naser know?--

A “Shouldn’t Naser know?

N “Yes, Naser knows, but I figure I’d ask you as well.”

N “Since the two of you spend so much time together and all.”

N “I hear Naser talking all the time about how worried he is for Fang.”

N “He’s such a good brother, isn’t he?”

“I’m just going to start filtering her.”

N “I just get so worried for her sometimes, too.”

N “Fang can just be so anti-social, you know?”

N “And she’s always avoiding me, too.”

N “I never can get a read on how she feels.”

N “Like when she was feeling upset a month or so ago.”

N “Or just after that concert she gave after winter break.”

“Wait.”

“Rewind a bit.”

A “How’d you know about how Fang felt sad a month ago?”

N “Oh, Naser told me!”

“...”

“The fuck is up with her?”

A “Then why ask me?”

N “You keep on asking that question!”

A “You keep on dodging that question.”

N “Hm? What am I dodging?”

A “Fang clearly doesn’t like you, you say so yourself.”

A “Yet you keep asking me about her.”

A “When you can just go to Naser.”

A “Fang is his sister after all.”

N “O-of course! It’s just I’d like to hear from you about her!”

A “Why me though? I don’t know anything about her, Naser knows Fang better than I do.”

N “Because you two have been getting so close! You’re even on a date right now Anon!”

“Naomi’s pupils dilate and her eyes dance away from me.”

N “In fact, you two make the cutest couple. Hahaha.”

“It’s the first time Naomi’s looked anything other than happy.”

A “Are you up to something?”

N “Why would I ever be up to something?”

A “Because you’re not making any sense.”

A “Naser knows her better than anyone else.”

A “But every time we talk you bring Fang up.”

A “Why?”

N “I have every reason to care!”

A “Why?”

N “Because-”

A “Why?!”

N “Because Naser wants to make Fang happy! A-and so do I, of course! ahahahaha!

“Naomi’s laugh is hollow. Her eyes shifting side to side.”

“Wait.”

“No…”

“I think back to all the times that the beige bitch had asked me about Fang.”

N “What a great opportunity for real friendship Anon! I’m so happy for you!”

Nas “...?”

A “...?”

N “If there’s anything Fang needs in these trying times, it’s a new friend to talk to!”

“This entire time.”

N “Oh, you’re spending time with Fang?”

A “She just needed me for some feedback.”

N “I see. I think it’s wonderful you’re making more friends here!”

A “Could you really say we’re friends? We’ve only met two or three times.”

N “I think you and Fang would make wonderful friends! She needs more friends like you!”

“Fuck, why didn’t I notice?”

“Naomi places a finger on her chin(?) for a moment and stares into space. Suddenly, her face lights up.”

N “Oh! What if you asked Fang for help? I’m sure she’d lend a hand!”

A “I dunno... She’s usually busy with her own work, and I don’t want to bother her more than I already do every day.”

N “It can’t hurt to ask, though, right? Just a thought.”

“That fucking bitch.”

“This entire time she’s been pushing me closer to Fang.”

“I must be the biggest fucking idiot.”

N “‘Uh… Anon? You’ve been spacing out.”

“She played me like a god damned fiddle!”

Nas “Did I miss something?”

“I look to Naser, who’s completely clueless to what Naomi has been doing for the

past month.”

“Just like I was.”

“What would he do in this situation?”

“He’s the boyscout here after all.”

“Fitting that the moral compass has a literal compass for a head.”

“I’m part of someone else’s plan.”

“Nothing I’ve done in the last several months was a conclusion reached on my own.”

“Are my feelings for Fang also just a tool for Naomi?”

“What do I even do here?”

>>Excuse Myself
>>Wait for Fang

>>Excuse Myself

“I need to get away from here, fast.”

A “Actually, I need to use the bathroom myself now.”

N “Oh, sure! We’ll be here!”

“I soullessly start dragging my feet away from Naomi.”

Nas “ANON. WAIT!”

“I freeze in place.”

Nas “Fair warning, watch the ceiling.”

“I sense great tragedy in those words…”

“Whatever. I don’t want to be here.”

“...”

“The public restroom looks clean enough from the outside, but I can see through the open doors that it gets cleaned maybe once a week.”

“I’m not here to use the restroom anyways.”

“If I’m right, I just need to look behind the building, and…”

“Jackpot.”

“Fang is resting on the wall with a half finished cigarette between her fingers.”

A “Got a spare?”

“She shrugs half-heartedly, holding out the half-smoked sin-stick to me.”

“I hesitate.”

“Fang tilts her head. Before she can pull her hand back I accept the smoke.”

“The cherry at the end burns dimly as I tap off the ash.”

“‘It’s not an indirect kiss or anything like that’ I chant as a mantra.”

“The drag is smooth, with the hint of mint to it.”

“The smoke exhaled is wispy, and I can feel my skin prickle.”

“I don’t know whether it’s because of the nicotine or whose lips I tasted.”

“Fuck.”

A “Thanks.”

“I hand her back the cigarette.”

F “Mmm…”

“Fang’s tail drums a steady rhythm on the wall as she takes one last, long drag.”

“She blows out a heavier cloud and drops the stump on the ground.”

“I stamp on the stub before she can, giving it a solid twist before kicking the dead end into the grass.”

F “How’d you find me?”

A “Where else would you be?”

“She gives a brief shrug.”

A “Anyways, we could probably get away with ditching Naser and Naomi.”

F “How’d you manage that?”

A “Secret family technique.”

F “Pssh.”

“Suddenly an image of Fang’s dad pops in my mind and I realize I probably shouldn’t be seen alone with her behind a public restroom, under penalty of ‘holy shit my spleen is outside my body’.”

A “Let’s get out of here.”

F “Alright. Let’s get a move on.”

“The two of us peek from behind the building to make sure the coast is clear of any brothers or scheming persimmon piranhas.”

“The coast is clear.”

F “I think I know where to look.”

A “Please tell me it’s not in this shitty Promenade place.”

F “Nah, it’s in Lil Tru.”

A “...Where?”

F “Little Troodon. It’s near enough that we can walk there.”

A “Why didn’t you mention it before?”

F “Naomi.”

A “Ah.”

“The two of us sprint conspicuously across the park to the nearest cover in the concrete jungle.”

“...”

>>go to Convergence Point a

>>Wait for Fang

“... No.”

“It doesn’t matter if my feelings are being used.”

“They’re still real to me.”

“And I want to actually help her.”

“Right now that means helping her find a venue.”

“Even if it means being around the coral cunt.”

Nas “Hey, Naomi, did you know that thirteen percent of public restrooms…”

“Naser babbles with Naomi while we wait for Fang to return.”

F “Alright, I’m done taking a dump or whatever.”

F “Let’s go.”

Nas “Wait… Why do you smell like smoke?”

F “Uh… I went to hong kong for a bit. Let’s go.”

Nas “You know you aren’t supposed to be smoking, Fang.”

F “Just drop it, dork.”

F “You don’t see me bringing up that leopard mankini you have in your closet.”

“Naser’s skin turns a noticeably lighter shade.”

A “That the only thing in the closet?”

F “Oh, of fucking course not.”

F “He’s also got this pink-”

Nas “I’M GOING TO STOP YOU RIGHT THERE.”

N “Why don’t we continue on now!”

“Naomi is holding a handkerchief to her nose, with a prominent splotch of red that’s steadily growing.”

F “Fffffffffffffffffffffffffiiiiinally.”

“...”

“Not even ten minutes later and we’re back where we started.”

N “-isn’t this one perfect! The stage is so well lit and-”

“Fang seems seconds away from successful recreation of Jing Ke’s assassination of King Zheng.”

“I know it’s wrong to poke a hornet’s nest, but…”

A “Fang, you alright?”

F “I hate everyone here.”

A “Ah.”

“Well then.”

“Fang’s about to commit homicide.”

“I should ask Naser to just split off for a while…”

“Naomi would back me up if I can convince her I’m taking Fang out on a d-EVENT.”

“I really don’t want Naomi’s help, though.”

“I could get Fang to ask Naser to break off, but uh…”

“She’s on the verge of fratricide too right now.”

Nas “Hey, Anon, you alright?”

A “Hm?”

Nas “You’ve got this intense look on you.”

A “Oh, sorry.”

A “Just… Trying to think of good places.”

“Guess it’s now or never.”

>>Ask Naser
>>Ask Fang

>>Ask Naser

A “Actually, Naser.”

Nas “Hm?”

“Naser slows his gait so he’s walking next to me.”

Nas “Something on your mind?”

“I lean in and start whispering.”

A “Yeah…”

A “It may be a good idea to split into groups.”

Nas “Ha, you’re funny.”

“Naser’s brow grows slick with sweat.”

“Christ what did his dad tell him?”

“This is gonna be difficult.”

A “Take a look at her man.”

A “You know she doesn’t get along with Naomi.”

“His eyes shift back, catching sight of Fang’s poorly withheld anger.”

Nas “...Ugh…”

A “It’s only a matter of time before things go nuclear.”

A “And as much as I’d find a catfight amusing, neither of us want to see Fang and Naomi duke it out.”

Nas “...”

Nas “... Be that as it may…”

Nas “We still can’t split.”

Nas “I’m supposed to be keeping an eye on you two right now.”

N “what are we whispering about?”

“RAPTOR-JESUS FUCK.”

“Naomi has circled around behind us and pokes her head between Naser and I.”

Nas “Don’t worry about it, babe.”

Nas “Anon just wanted to split the group for a bit.”

N “...”

N “...”

N “That’s a wonderful idea!”

Nas “But babe, you know I’m supposed to-”

N “I think you should trust Anon a bit more!”

A “Do you really think I’m the frisky type?”

“Naser looks at me for a moment.”

Nas “Yes.”

A “Wow.”

Nas “It’s true.”

N “I mean...”

A “A) Go fuck yourselves.”

A “And B) I’m not some degenerate.”

N “Still, despite his looks, the Anon I know won’t end up doing anything weird!”

Nas “...You really think so?”

N “Sure!”

Nas “... You promise to not make it weird or anything, right?”

A “I-I… What? Whatever, no, of course not.”

N “Seems it’s settled then!”

N “Come on, Naser! We’ll go look on the east side of town!”

Nas “... Alright…”

Nas “I trust you, Anon.”

“Naomi grabs Naser by the arm and leads him around a corner and onto another street.”

“Naser gives one last worried look back before he’s out of sight.”

F “What were the three of you huddling about?”

“Fang was walking behind us this whole time? I didn’t notice.”

A “Oh, I was just getting rid of them.”

F “Oh, man, you’re a lifesaver.”

A “Seemed like it was either this or someone ends up with a black eye.”

F “You think I’d stop at a black eye?”

>>Move to Convergence point b

>>Ask Fang

A “Don’t worry about it.”

Nas “Alright…”

“He looks ahead again, paying great attention to Naomi’s spergery.”

“I turn to Fang again.”

A “Hey, if you don’t want to stay in a group, why don’t you ask Naser to split off for a while?”

F “Why me?”

A “He’ll listen to you.”

A “He’s only doing this because your dad put him up to it.”

A “I think he trusts you enough to be willing to take Naomi elsewhere for a while.”

F “Hm…”

A “Give him a chance.”

“Fang looks in contemplation at Naser walking ahead of us.”

F “Ehh, might as well try.”

F “Hey, Stephen Ha-Wing!”

A “Wait, that’s not how-”

Nas “Yeah?”

A “He responded to it?!”

F “Can you take your girlfriend and fuck off elsewhere?”

F “Me and her just aren’t going to get along.”

F “And it’d cover more ground.”

“Naser slows down a bit.”

Nas “I uh… Don’t think that’s a great idea.”

Nas “We should stick together, right Naomi?”

N “Well…”

“Two can play this game you citrine psycho.”

“I look at Naomi and give her a subtle nod.”

#[Keikaku Naomi here.]

N “I think it’s a wonderful idea, we can check in the Promenade! Oh I know this wonderful cafe and-”

F “Great. Now fuck off.”

Nas “H-hold on a second!”

Nas “Dad said he’ll do to me anything that you do to Fang!”

F/A/N “...What…”

Nas “Fang, you gotta promise to not let Anon do anything creepy.”

A “That’s fuckin’ rude.”

“Fang looks at me and grins wickedly.”

Nas “Please Fang.”

F *sigh* “I promise.”

F “Now go.”

“Naser gulps and nods.”

Nas “You better not do anything creepy Anon!”

“With that Naser and Naomi leave, turning the corner onto another street.”

>>move to Convergence point b

>>Convergence point b

“...”

“Now it’s just the two of us.”

“Alone.”

“Oh and there’s the alarms again. I think I’m finally starting to tune them out though.”

“Fang reaches into her pocket and withdraws a crumpled back of cigarettes.”

A “Got a spare?”

“She shrugs half-heartedly, holding out the pack to me.”

“There’s one left.”

“I hesitate.”

“Fang tilts her head. Before she can pull her hand back I accept the last smoke.”

“I bring the butt to my lips, feeling the pod within the filter.”

A “Figures you smoke menthols.”

F “Oh shut up. And you better share, I don’t think I’ll be getting a fresh pack any time soon.”

“She hands me her lighter, a little cheap pink Bic.”

“It’s quick and easy, no wind to worry about as my thumb rolls over the top and the tiny ember of a flame sears the end of the cigarette.”

“I pop the pod with my incisor and pull in slowly.”

“The draw is smooth, with a hint of mint to it.”

“The cherry at the end burns dimly as I tap off the ash.”

“The smoke exhaled is wispy, and I can feel my nerves ease.”

F “Ha, pussy.”

A “It’s your last one, wanna savor it.”

“I hand her back the cigarette.”

“‘It’s not an indirect kiss or anything like that’ I chant as a mantra.”

“Her drag is harsher, burning up twice the amount.”

“She blows out hazy rings, one after another, as if signaling an indigenous Raptor tribe.”

A “Trying to show off now?”

F “Bet you can’t do it.”

“Fang grins as she hands the stick back to me.”

A “You trigga-lipped it.”

F “It’s still good, man.”

“The filter feels moist between my index and middle knuckles.”

“I bring the smoke back to my lips, trying to ignore the wetness of it.”

“I draw in even more, burning up another quarter of it.”

“I can feel my skin prickle as I exhale a thicker fog.”

“I don’t know whether it’s because of the nicotine or whose lips I imagine I taste.”

“Fuck.”

F “Ha, called it.”

A “Mmm. Yeah, I can’t.”

“Fang’s tail ticks a steady rhythm like a metronome as she takes one last, long drag.”

“She blows out a thick cloud and drops the stump on the ground.”

“I stamp on the stub before she can, giving it a solid twist before kicking the dead end into the street.”

A “So now what?”

F “I think I know where we can look.”

A “Please tell me it’s not in this shitty Promenade place.”

F “Nah, it’s Lil Tru.”

A “...Where?”

F “Little Troodon. It’s near enough that we can walk there.”

A “Why didn’t you mention it before?”

F “Naomi.”

A “Ah.”

“Fang leads the way, navigating us away from this overly expensive part of town.”

>>go to Convergence Point a

>>Convergence Point a

“...”

“Little Troodon is completely unlike the rest of the city.”

“Instead of skyscrapers and glass buildings, the whole place is a series of interconnected alleyways forming a plaza.”

“Mostly booths for scamming vendors, but every now and then an actual building can be seen.”

“Countless salesmen call out to Fang and I.”

“Fang just strides past all of them.”

F “Just don’t make eye contact.”

“She must know the place.”

“One child runs up and gives me a flower to mark me for pickpockets.”

“I toss it in the nearest bin.”

F “Good eye.”

A “Living in the ass-end of this place, I’ve picked up a thing or two.”

“The two of us check the sparsely located buildings one by one.”

“I make sure to mark down the foreign swears in a notepad to look up later.”

“Several hours pass as both the sun and the temperature drops.”

F “Can’t believe we’re still looking.”

F “These people are usually looking for any way possible to attract customers.”

A “Maaaaybe you shouldn’t have insulted that one guy…”

F “Fuck him… callin’ me a meteor dodger… fucking prick.”

A “Still, we must have checked dozens of places by now.”

A “But why won’t anyone have a band?”

???(passing shopkeeper) “Her reputation precedes her.”

“Fang’s pupils contract.”

“Not this again.”

F “HER?!?!You people are all the same! Thinking that you have to go off-”

A “Fang!”

F “WHAT!”

??? “See what I mean.”

F “Choke on a platter of cocks.”

??? “Everyone here knows her family.”

F “A full platter! Stacks high!”

A “Look, buddy, you’ve gotta know a place that’ll let us play.”

??? “Weeeell, maybe I can uh… point ya in the right direction…” “

??? “...For a price…”

“Oh god damn it.”

F “No way!”

A “Fine, I’ll pay.”

“I can hear my wallet commit sudoku in my pocket.”

??? “Buy this here Phone Roomba and I’ll tell ya.”

A “...A phone roomba.”

??? “Cleans yer phone. Sorta cute lookin’.”

??? “Here, I’ll show ya.”

“He feels around his pocket for one of the roombas, then holds his phone out on one hand.”

“He puts the device on, and it whirrs to life, slowly crossing the screen.”

“When it got to the edge, it beeped and turned around, making a return trip to where it started.”

“After a few trips, the merchant turns the roomba off and gives us an expectant leer.”

F “... I just use my shirt though…”

A “Fuck it, fine.”

“I slap down the money on the thieving rhinorex’s booth.”

??? “Good on ya, lad, there’s good ole’ Dino-moe’s a bit west o’ here. Ole Moe loves hostin’ you kids.”

A “The pizza chain?”

??? “Close, kid. Trust me on this.”

“The shopkeeper gives one last smug wave to us.”

“I motion for Fang to follow and start heading in the direction the shopkeeper showed me.”

“...”

“After twisting through the endless maze of merchants and frivolities Fang finally stops in front of a building.”

A “We’re here.”

“The building is an ancient antiquated italian restaurant, with the words ‘DINO-MOE’S PIZZA & PASTA’ written on a grand sign out front.”

F “Pizza, huh?”

F “In the middle of Little Trudoon?”

A “Let’s see.”

“I open the double doors for Fang to enter.”

“There’s a plaque for the National Register of Historic Places on the window.”

A “Historical, huh?”

“Inside is a homely italian styled pizzeria.”

“The warm candle lighting against the lattice dividers of the booths casts shades of orange along the walls and floor.”

“The two of us walk up to the reception desk.”

“A very tired waitress puts on a plastic smile when she sees us.”

Waitress “Welcome to historic Dino-Moes, table for two?”

A “Actually, we just need to ask the manager something.”

“The waitress rolls her eyes and skulks off.”

F “Service with a smile, huh?”

A “Working in the industry grates on you.”

F “This is a historical place though, isn’t it?”

F “Wouldn’t they have higher standards for-”

Moe “AYYYYYY IF IT ISN’T LITTLE LUCY!”

“Fang’s skin goes several shades lighter.”

Moe “I HAVEN’T SEEN YA SINCE AUGUST!”

Moe “C’MERE AND GIVE UNCLE MOE A HUG!”

“An older t-rex hobbles his way to us with arms spread wide.”

“Well, as wide as he could at least.”

Fang squawks in protest as she’s pressed into his apron covered belly.”

F “U-uncle M-Moe? What are you doing here?”

Moe “I’m workin’, toots!”

Moe “Dis is my restaurant!”

A “Hold up. Your uncle is Moe. Moe as in the Moe that started Dino-Moe’s?”

F “No! I mean… I don’t know!”

Moe “HAHAHAHA AH MY BABY GIRL ASN’T SWUNG BY IN AGES!”

Moe “AN’ WHO BE DIS LUCKY GUY? DON’T TELL ME YA GOTS YERSELF HITCHED ALREADY!”

“I feel my own skin warm up now. The old T-Rex laughs louder and slaps his rotund belly.”

Moe “Relax kids, I’m messin’ wit ya. Come on I’ll gives ya da bes’ seats in da house.”

“Moe wraps an arm around each of our shoulders and drags us through the restaurant to a cozy yet dark booth sequestered away from the rest.”

“We’re shoved into the seats and the owner/uncle bends over the table to light the sole candle there.”

“I’m having a candle-lit dinner with Fang now.”

“...”

“The hell is happening?!”

Moe “Now yous twos wait right there while I make my lil princess’ favrite pie. On me, o’ course.”

“Moe proceeds to saunter off, pushing through the double doors that probably led to the kitchen.”

“I look over the candle to Fang.”

“She looks how I feel at the moment.”

“Lost and confused.”

A “...What just happened…”

F “...I don’t know…”

A “So…”

“Fuck. Come on Anon, you can do it. You were part of the team that kicked reddit’s ass in Claws of Duty: Jurassic Warfare.”

A “Is that really your uncle?”

F “No, he’s just a good family friend.”

F “My dad goes bowling every Thursday with him.”

A “Sounds fun.”

A “You ever go along?”

F “Not anymore.”

F “All that sportsy stuff doesn’t appeal to me.”

F “Besides, I have school and band stuff to worry about.”

F “Not to mention my dad’s a bit of an asshole.”

“The image of a golf club comes to mind.”

A “You don’t say?”

F “Uh huh.”

F “Whenever I’m listening to my music at night he always yells through the door about ‘audible bowel movements’.”

A “Honestly, do you blame him?”

“Fang smirks.”

F “Maybe not.”

A “My dad isn’t even really there most of the time.”

A “When I do interact with him, it’s just these huge orders about what to do with myself.”

A “You’re going to camp, you’re going to Brazil, you’re going to some coastal town for half a year.”

A “Then again, that last one was more my fault.”

F “Sounds rough.”

F “What about your Mom?”

A “What about her?”

A “Pretty standard mother, a bit naggy.”

A “She’d always try to dress me for school, so i’d look like the biggest dork ever.”

A “One time she got me into a denim jacket and jeans combo.”

F “The Double-Denim Disaster! PFfffffft.”

A “How’d you know- waaaaaaiiiit a second.”

F “Another word and you get hot wax in your face.”

“I’m holding back my laughter behind my fist.”

A “And she’d always try to embarrass me in front of everyone.”

F “Don’t all moms do that?”

A “Why don’t you tell me, Pirate Princess?”

“You know, hot wax really only hurts for the first few seconds.”

“That cute look of surprise though? Lasting for eternity.”

F “Breathe a word of that to anyone and this candle is going up where the sun don’t shine while it’s still lit.”

“I scrape the hardened wax on my forehead off with one hand.”

A “Alright alright. Sheesh. But what about your mom?”

A “Is she like, on heroin or something?”

F “Ha, no. She’s just… Always in her own little world.”

F “Nothing is ever wrong, there’s no flaws with anything…”

F “No concern is worth worrying about.”

A “Ah. Yeah, that can’t be healthy.”

F “Eh, I’ve made do so far.”

A “Well, for what it’s worth, you’ve still got Trish, Reed, and Naser.”

F “Pffft. Yeah, the one whose horn is more important than finding a place, my shitty baby brother, and Reed.”

“Fang groans as she leans back in her seat.”

F “The new guy is the only one I can rely on. My life sucks.”

A “Hmmmm, I dunno…”

F “We haven’t found a venue and our show is in a week. Gah! Fuckin’ Naomi! Fuckin’ Dad!”

A “On the flip-side, we’re getting some of your favorite pizza at one of the pricier italian places around. For free too.”

F “But the venue…”

A “We still have time. So, pizza first and then we find a place for your show.”

Moe “Someone say pizza?”

Moe “Someone order a fuckin’ pizza?!”

“Moe slides a large pizza onto the table in front of us.”

Moe “A pizza with extra sausage, anchovies, pepperoni, and ham, also known as the Moe’s Original Meateor Pizza, Lucy’s favorite!”

F “I go by Fang now, actually.”

Moe “Whoa-hoa! The youth are getting uppity with me!”

Moe “Ya try’na make ol’ Moe confused, ya punk?”

“He gives Fang a light noogie.”

Moe “So what’ve you punks been up to?”

A “Actually, mister Moe, we were going to ask-”

Moe “Mister? Young punk ya don’ need ta be so formal.”

“AAAAArgh fuck my head.”

Moe “You younguns, I ‘eard ya talkin’ bout yer parents.”

“Ah man, here comes the lecture.”

Moe “You know, the best part bein’ young is-”

Waitress “Mooee!!”

Waitress “We got a code K on line 1!”

“Moe hangs his head in despair.”

Moe “‘Old dat thought, kids. I’ze gots a pissed of motha ta deal wit.”

“Moe stomps away to the reception desk, leaving Fang, the Pizza, and me.”

F “Hey, free food.”

“Fang piles three slices on a plate, catching a few of the anchovies before they slide off.”

“I think I'll only take one, I’d rather not get heartburn at eighteen.”

“Man, this place sure isn’t historical for no reason.”

“Even something as ridiculous as this tastes phenomenal.”

“Good thing it’s free, I’d be willing to pay a premium for this stuff.”

“Kicks Comet Pizza’s ass any day of the week.”

F “It really hooks you in, don’t it?”

“Oh, I didn’t realize I was in my own world for a bit.”

A “Uh, yeah.”

A “It’s real good.”

“Huh, she’s already down two slices?”

F “Shame I have to limit myself around the good stuff.”

“Fang picks up her last slice, tosses it in the air…”

“...and snaps it out of the air with one bite.”

A “Whoa.”

A “Cool trick. Do you do parties?”

“While she raises her middle finger at that, the grin on Fang’s face says it’s more out of humor than malice.”

F “You gonna finish that?”

“I look at my half eaten slice. I guard my hoard with an arm bulwark.”

A “Mine.”

F “Heh. Didn’t want it anyway.”

A “Mine.”

“I’m quick to finish off my slice to keep it to myself while Fang goes for her second helping.”

“The pizza doesn’t last, sadly, as we continue to take slices. Its’ life is ended in a matter of minutes, when otherwise I would have committed pastacide in an hour.”

“By the end I’m satisfied, enjoying the feeling of the itis.”

F “Aaaah… Uncle Moe knows just how to make it.”

A “Yeah, your uncle is pretty cool.”

“Fang gets out of her seat, legs unsteady as she fights off the need for a well needed nap.”

F “I’ll see ya at the front. I’ve got a serious need. For real this time.”

“I snicker and nod.”

A “Sure, leave me to deal with your Uncle.”

“I force myself out of the booth and casually meander to the reception area.”

“Moe is there placing the receiver of the desk’s phone back.”

Moe “‘Ey son, youse enjoy da meal?”

A “Definitely. Feel like I’mma black out any second.”

Moe “Hahaha. Dat’s what I like ta hear!”

Moe “Glad to make yas date, then.”

A “A-ah, uh… we aren’t-”

Moe “No? Coulda fooled me wit’ dat disaster youse called flirtin’.”

A “No, really!”

A “Fang’s looking for a venue.”

A “Her band is planning a show for next week.”

Moe “Reeeaaally now. Why not have it here den?”

“I look around at the restaurant, trying to find any real place for the band to actually play.”

Moe “Ay, dun sweat the details, kid.”

“Moe grins.”

Moe “Me and da boys are used to makin’ room for shows.”

Moe “Youse jus tell ma l’il Lucy ya got a place, then yas sure ta sweep ‘er of ‘er feet.”

A “ah er wha I th huh?”

“Anon.exe has failed.”

Moe “Ah ta be young and in love.”

Moe “listen here, Anon.”

Moe “I segreti dell’amore, the secret ta love…”

Moe “It’s not shared mis’ry. Youse can complain bout all da lil details in life.”

Moe “But dat don’t fix yas problems.”

Moe “Howeva!”

Moe “Yas can’t be tryna do everythang for her neitha.”

Moe “Othawize she’d jus expec ya ta fix all her problems for her.”

Moe “The secret is support!”

A “...Support?”

Moe “Ay, youse gots ta be her support. She gots ta fix her own problems, but youse gots ta back her up on dem.”

Moe “An’ from what I hear from ma boy Nasa, you’ve already been dun dat.”

“I suppose I have. Like at her band practice, or on the roof.”

Moe “Like now!”

Moe “Hahahahaha BADA BING!”

??? “BADA BOOM.”

Moe “Back ta work Jerry!”

Moe “Anyway.”

Moe “Be good ta her, Anon. She’ll be good ta youse, I raised her right afta all.”

A “Err, thanks, Moe.”

Moe “Ay, anytime.”

Moe “I’ve been hangin’ around youse fools for too long, I can’t jus’ ignore the kitchen anymore, youse know?”

Moe “Give little Lucy my regards, huh?”

A “Sure.”

“Moe saunters back to the kitchen.”

“Now that I think about it, how does he cook with those little arms?”

“I look a bit closer, there’s several toy claws hanging on a rack just inside the kitchen door.”

“Somehow I don’t think that was something I was supposed to see.”

F “Alright, I’m back.”

F “Let’s hit the road.”

F “Maybe we’ll find somewhere to play before sundown.”

A “Actually, we really don’t.”

“Fang freezes in place.”

F “How?”

A “Your Uncle.”

F “You… Asked Uncle Moe if my band could play?”

A “Yeah, he seemed pretty excited about it.”

A “He’s got a stage ready and everything.”

“Fang still isn’t moving…”

“Did I do something wrong?”

“It’s a blur of motion.”

“One second Fang looks like she’s going to start hyperventilating.”

“Next it’s like I’m wrapped in a blanket of down feathers.”

“Being shaken from side to side.”

“With a tinnitus inducing scream right in my ear.”

F “AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA WE GOT A VENUE AAAAAAAAA”

“It’s so infectious.”

“My arms reflexively support her, wrapping around below her wings.”

“Fang’s arms are wrapped around my shoulders as she clings to me.”

“I feel something warm, soft and somewhat moist press against my cheek.”

F “WE GOT A VENUE WE GOT A VENUE WE GOT A VEN- AH!”

“All movement stops and reality resumes.”

“Fang’s wings withdraw from around us.”

“Fang pulls away until only her hands are on my shoulders.”

“My hands are now at her sides and I can feel her warm scales on my palms.”

“Oh.”

“Wow.”

“I uh…”

“...huh…”

“It’s the sound of clapping that causes us to jump apart, faces bright red and breath rapid.”

“Back at the kitchen door is Moe, clapping loudly with his miniscule arms.”

A “Er… I suppose we uh…”

F “Um…”

A “Call… Naser?”

F “Y-yeah, a-and tell him… right?”

A “Totally. VVURM DRAMA’s got a venue!”

“Fang smiles softly and nods.”

“Good thing Naomi put Naser’s number in my phone.”

“Even though I didn’t ask for it.”

“The tone rings twice.”

Nas “Yes?”

A “Hey, Naser.”

Nas “Hold on, I’ll put you on speaker.”

Nas “Go ahead.”

A “Mission accomplished, we got a venue set up.”

N “Oh, they did?”

N “That’s great!”

A “Yeah, we’re at Dino-Moe’s place in Little Troodon.”

Nas “Cool.”

Nas “I’ll bring the NasCar over in a jiffy!”

“I’m going to punch him.”

N “You sure you want us to get you now?”

N “Now that you have business out of the way you and Fang could go do something fun!”

A “...”

“You know, it may not be such a bad idea.”

“Even if it’s an idea from the Orchid Oppressor.”

“...”

“Good lord, I’m never going to be able to play golf again.”

A “I’ll pass. It’s getting pretty dark.”

N “Aww…”

Nas “Alright, stay put and we’ll be there soon.”

A “Alright.”

A “See you.”

“All’s left is to wait a few minutes for the ride to get here.”

“Fang is sitting on a bench in front of one of the restaurant windows.”

“She’s humming to herself, and her tail is drumming eurobeat on the bench.”

“I take a seat next to her.”

“By now the plaza has cooled down, most shops have closed and the only people still out are returning home after the long day.”

“The two of us sit in companionable silence save for Fang’s humming and tail drumming.”

“Her mood is contagious and soon enough I’m humming with her.”

“I already know the song.”

“It’s from the roof.”

“Except more… more…”

“Happy.”

“The scene is great.”

“Just Fang and I on a bench in the waning sunlight in the middle of a deserted plaza.”

“Taking the moment in, I almost don’t notice Fang scooting closer to me.”

“...”

Nas “Mom! Dad! We’re home!”

“The ride back to Fang’s house went by uneventfully.”

“Fang and I didn’t talk about what happened so Naser didn’t have an aneurysm.”

FangMom “Oh! Welcome home, Naser dear!”

FangMom “How did your date go?”

FangMom “I’m just dying to know!”

FangDad “I am also interested.”

“I don’t know how but he’s looking into the exact center of my pupils with no margin of error.”

FangDad “So, Ayy-non, how was your trip with my little girl?”

F “Dad!”

FangMom “Why don’t you go get ready for bed Lucy.”

“Fang glowers.”

FandDad “Lucy your mom-”

“I look to Fang…”

“Okay, yeah. It was a date.”

A “It went well, sir.”

FangDad “What did-”

A “We were able to find a venue, and I met Fang’s Uncle Moe.”

“Fang’s dad sputters.”

A “I wouldn’t mind doing this again.”

“Oh wow. The look on Fang’s face is really cute.”

FangMom “Oh I’m so happy for you two!”

“I wave as I turn to the door.”

A “I’ll see you at school Fang.”

F “Y-yeah. You too, Anon!”

“With that I exit the door. Once it’s closed I can feel all that bravado evaporate and my legs turn to jelly.”

“...”

6. concert day

On the day of the concert one week later, Anon sees all the electrical cords scattered about the stage and asks Trish about the potential tripping hazard. She reassures Anon it is not a problem and they won't end up tripping during the concert, citing Reed as an expert on the subject. Anon has to either trust Trish's judgement or to organize the wires better and plug them all into a surge protector. The correct choice is to trust Trish, and the concert goes over well with the audience. If Anon chooses not to trust Trish and 'fixes' the electrical wiring then during the last song the fuse breaks, killing some lights and Trish's electric bass.

If the correct choice is made then the concert goes off without a hitch, and Fang jumps offstage to embrace Anon while the crowd's cheering, much to Trish's consternation. If the wrong choice is made, the audience just sees the incident as a cliche finale to the show, and goes over slightly worse with them, and Fang high-fives Anon once it's over. Trish blames Anon for the power going out and accuses him of sabotaging the show. Fang diffuses the situation.

While cleaning up, Reed gets them all talking about the past and how this is his first time being in a show that went over well, bringing up a conversation about the past. Anon mentions he tried getting into music once and namedrops his old school, and Trish opens up a bit, asking more about Anon's personal life and history (foreshadowing to Trish researching into Anon's embarrassing past).

“-One Week Later-”

“The week’s been a mix of excitement and trepidation.”

“More excitement from Fang and the band and trepidation on my part around Fang.”

“Having come to terms with how I feel, I just can’t stop noticing all the little things she does.”

“Like her cute tail wagging to a silent tune.”

“Or her weird and funny way of eating.”

“Or how soft and huggable her wings look.”

“Raptor Jesus, if this is what love is I kind of want to sample buckshot.”

“And yet I don’t want it to stop.”

“Even now as Moe and Reed work on clearing the floor of tables and making a noise.”

“And I’m drooling like an idiot as I watch Fang bend over a large Amp.”

??? “Ahem”

“Even now her tail wags to that mysterious beat in her head.”

??? “AHEM”

“Not to mention the way those jeans hug her hips and ass-”

??? “AH-HEM!”

A “Hm?”

T “Aren’t you supposed to be helping?”

“Hm? OH SHIT RIGHT!”

A “Y-yeah, right! Just moving this table ahahaha.”

“I pick up the last table on the floor and hurriedly move it to the suspiciously large storage room in the back of Dino-Moe’s.”

“I set the table down with the rest, right next to the seemingly out of place buckets of cement mix.”

“Looking out from the closet, the joint is actually pretty big.”

“The area is a good one-hundred and fifty by two-hundred feet, so without the tables there’s enough space for at least a few hundred people.”

“Impressed, I let out a low whistle.”

Stella “I’m on time, right?”

“Where did she come from?”

A “Hm? Who are you?”

Stella “I’m Stella. We’ve met before.”

A “Who?”

“I look the pale green, spine covered thing up and down.”

A “Uh..”

St “I read your fortune? You got the Judgement?”

A “Yeah I got nothing.”

St “...Nervous bladder…”

A “OH! Yeah I remember.”

St “That’s very rude.”

A “Anyway, the show isn’t for another half-hour.”

St “So what did you think of your fortune?”

A “Uh… I kinda forgot…”

St “O-oh… well… Uh… How would you like another?”

A “Eh… I got time to kill, sure.”

“She pulls her deck of tarot cards from… somewhere…”

“Where the fuck does she hide these things?”

“Anyway, she fans the deck out.”

St “Alright, take one.”

“I take one at random and show it to her.”

>>ko-op

St “Oh my, inverted Empress.”

St “You need to be wary about future negligence, Anon.”

>>doomer

St “Inverted Hermit.”

St “Anon, if you ever feel lonely you can come to me.”

>>tradwife

St “Inverted Hierophant.”

St “You need to be wary of your words and actions, Anon.”

>>golden

St “Upright Strength”

St “OH! I don’t think you need to worry about what’s to come, Anon.”

>>

A “The fuck does that mean?”

St “Uh… er… Gottago,naturecalls,seeyouattheshow!”

“She flees in overall pissing fear.”

“...Well then…”

“What was I doing?”

“Oh yeah.”

“I step up to the stage to see the band’s point of view.”

“And then promptly trip.”

“*FWAP*”

A “Argh!”

“What the fuck was that?!”

“There’s a loose cord over my foot.”

“That’s…”

“Probably not good for the show.”

“I stand up and wipe the dust from my pants.”

“Trish is the organizer…”

“Right now she’s giving Reed a lecture on why it’s probably a bad idea to put carfentanyl in the smoke machine.”

A “Hey, Trish!”

“Trish looks over her shoulder and Reed’s face lights up.”

A “Can you come here a second?”

“Trish sighs, points between her eyes and Reed’s, and stomps over to the stage.”

T “Whaddayawant, skinnie?”

A “I just tripped on one of the wires up here.”

T “Sucks to be you.”

“Bitch.”

A “Should I plug them all into a surge protector so you guys don’t fall during the concert?”

T “What?”

T “No, of course not.”

T “We won’t trip, I have that on good authority.”

A “Whose?”

T “...Reed’s.”

A “...”

T “...”

A “And you trust his word on something like this?”

T “Sure.”

T “He’s the expert on this stuff and all.”

“Before I can object, Trish turns away and runs after Reed who is huddled over the smoke machine, pungent fumes wafting from it’s exposed innards.”

“Well, seems like he’s got that handled.”

“Trish seemed pretty confident that Reed knows what he’s doing with the stage.”

“But Reed obviously doesn’t understand cable management.”

>>Leave the stage as-is

“Reed may not understand cable management, but then again neither did I.”

“Probably better to let sleeping fossils lie.”

>>Fix the cables

“It could be a serious hazard if I leave them like this.”

“Like a fire hazard or something. I think.”

“I’ll just put them all on one of Moe’s surge protectors.”

“Aaaaaand done.”

>>Continues here

“Now that that’s taken care of, I glance at the pizza-themed clock on the wall.”

“Thirty minutes until the show starts.”

“The band is doing one last sound test, Reed’s bass drum bearing another new logo for VVURM DRAMA that doesn’t look half bad.”

“Trish has a wicked grin on her face and I can practically see the dollar signs in her eyes.”

“And Fang…”

“Fang looks anxious, hands wringing the strap of her hollowbody electric guitar.”

“I consider what I’m about to do extremely stupid but…”

A “Hey.”

“She jumps a little as I step back on stage. Her knuckles are bright white as they strangle the leather strap.”

F “...Hey.”

Moe “The secret is support!”

“I offer her my most supportive smile.”

A “You’ve got this, Fang.”

F “Don’t feel like I do, though.”

A “You do. You’ve been practicing all month for this.”

A “And you’ve improved immensely since your last gig.”

A “I have complete faith in your ability to play guitar.”

A “Don’t worry so much.”

A “Just don't fret about it, you’ll be fine”

“Trish rolls her eyes, Reed’s vacant stare has a bit of approval.”

T “At least it wasn't a dinosaur pun this time.”

A “I'm not that unfunny!”

T “You are.”

A “Fuck you, I’m hilarious.”

T “No one thinks that, loser.”

A “Don’t you have something to be triggered about!”

T “YOU CAN’T USE THAT WORD, THAT’S OUR WORD!”

A “Just did, wanna see me do it again?”

F “Ladies, Ladies, please.”

F “Shut the fuck up.”

F “We’ve got sweet music to play.”

>>Leave the stage as-is

“Showtime”

F “Allright! Next up we got “The!”

“WHAT.”

“They go right into their next song with gusto.”

“...”

“An hour later and the band is wrapping up their last song for the night.”

“I take my eyes off the stage to get a read on the crowd.”

“Easily a good hundred people showed up to see VVURM DRAMA, better than any of us expected.”

“The look on Fang’s face when everyone began filtering into the restaurant was priceless.”

“They were on the last song of the night, the bizarrely long name of which I missed.”

F “I JUST GOTTA ASK:”
“WHY IS HITLER”
“RIDING MY BIKE”
“PRETENDING TO BE”
“A MONKEY”

“Oh right… Reed definitely wrote this one.”

“The band really has improved, as opposed to booing and pointing at the audience is listening intently.”

F “AT THREEEEEEE AAAAAAAA MMMMM”
“IN THE MORNIIIIIING!”
“ON A FUCKIN’ TUESDAAAAY!”

“After the song ends, VVURM DRAMA hangs onto the pose of their final note.”

“It’s silent.”

“I applaud the band, eventually some other patrons join in.”

“The applause turns to cheers, and the cheers turn to uproar.”

“The crowd was cheering.”

“Actually cheering this time.”

“The bandmates’ faces light up, and they all glance at each other.”

“The hard work has taken its toll on the three, giving them varying degrees of perspiration.”

“The sweat is trickling down Fang’s forehead, Trish has gone from an afro to dreadlocks, and Reed is providing the restaurant with a nice ocean scent.”

“Fang finishes with a furious flurry of strumming on her fretboard.”

F “Wooooooooo! THANK YOU LITTLE TROODON!”

“The crowd’s approval is obvious, even in the makeshift mosh pit where I see Stella getting fake curb-stomped.”

“At least I think it’s fake.”

“Eh, I don’t see any blood so she’s good.”

F “ANON!”

“Before I could react I was swept up in a blur of feathers.”

“Fang wrapped her arms and wings around me and kept rocking back and forth.”

F “OHMYGOD OHMYGOD WE DID IT WE DID IT”

F “THEY ACTUALLY LOVE VVURM DRAMA!”

“I tune out the alarms screaming in my head and hug her back.”

“Her wings are just as soft and huggable as they look.”

“Fang’s beak settles against my cheek, the warm scales sliding smoothly up and down against it.”

“This is nice.”

"I become aware of my hands, planted firmly on the small of Fang’s back and pressing her closer to me.”

“Beneath my splayed palms is soft, warm and drenched in sweat. I find that I don’t really mind the slickness.”

T “Fang?”

“I feel like I could stay like this forever.”

T “Hellooo, Fang?”

“Fang suddenly flinches, and I get a split second view of a purple hand on her shoulder.”

“Her face is beet red and the warmth in my own cheeks tells me I don’t look far behind.”

“Trish looks like she’s sucked on a lemon with how twisted her face is.”

“The tiny triceratops pulls Fang out of my hands, and I can picture my fist twisting that horn right off her face.”

T “Hmmm... “

A “Great show, right?”

T “I guess. For our first show, anyway.”

F “What? It was great though! Everyone was cheering!”

T “But it was a small crowd.”

A “Was it? The place was packed.”

T “Small venue. We gotta think bigger now.”

A “Why bigger?

T “Because I still have stock!”

“She motions to the bar, where there is still some hung up shirts with the new mediocre logo lazily spray painted on.”

A “Have you sold much?”

T “Three buttons, four stickers, and an Apron!”

A “An apron?”

Moe “AY, KIDS!”

#moe now has vvurm drama apron

Moe “LOOKIT DIS ‘ERE AH-PRON YA LIL TRIGGA FRIEN SOL’ ME!”

“Trish looks split on whether to be mad about the trigga comment or happy about the successful sale.”

??? “Hey! Someone took ma apron!”

Moe “GIT BACK TA WORK JERRY YER ON DA CLOCK!”

F “It uh… looks nice, Uncle Moe.”

Moe “Anyways, youse all gonna be helpin’ wit da clean up, right?”

“I look at the absolute mess around us.”

“Fuck.”

>>Move To Convergence point

>>Fix the Cables

“Showtime”

“I take my eyes off the stage to get a read on the crowd.”

“Easily a good hundred people showed up to see VVURM DRAMA, better than any of us expected.”

“The look on Fang’s face when everyone began filtering into the restaurant was priceless.”

“They were on the last song of the night, the bizarrely long name of which I missed.”

F “I JUST GOTTA ASK:”
“WHY IS HITLER”
“RIDING MY BIKE”

“PRETENDING TO BE”
“A MONKEY”

“Oh right… Reed definitely wrote this one.”

“The band really has improved, as opposed to booing and pointing at the audience is listening intently.”

“And nobody has tripped so far.”

F “AT THREEEEEEE AAAAAAAA MMMMM”
“IN THE MORNIIIIIIIG!”
“ON A-”

“As if right on cue, half of the lights on stage cut out.”

“Trish strummed silently before giving a confused glance at the speakers.”

F “T-tuesday?”

“Fang fell out of tempo with Reed’s drums, stumbling over the end of the song.”

“It’s silent.”

“I began to clap, followed by several other patrons.”

“Including Stella who looked seconds away from being curb-stomped.”

“My eyes scan the room before noticing Trish, the sheer vehement rage radiating from her visibly distorting the air around her.”

“Fuck.”

“My jaw aches as I picture myself in Stella’s place, courtesy of one pissed of womanlet.”

“Before I have the chance to escape I hear my one saving grace.”

F “ANON!”

“Fang reaches me before Trish leaves the stage, extending her hand for a high-five.”

F “We did it!”

T “No thanks to that asshole!”

“Oh no.”

F “What’s wrong?”

T “Skinnie sabotaged the show!”

T “I told him not to touch the wires and look what happened!”

A “I was only trying to help.”

“Trish holds up her hand to my face, waving the other around in grand gestures.”

T “You ruined the big finale! We missed our chance to make it big!”

T “Why is it that only my bass cut out anyways?!”

T “Are you actively trying to ruin us?!”

T “I told you Reed knew what he was doing!”

T “Do you not trust him and I?”

“Tears trickle down her sweat-glazed face.”

T “Is Fang really the only one here you care about?!”

T “You are not the only person in the world!”

“This hypocritical bitch!”

“The sharp words cut right through me.”

F “Jeez, Trish. The show went great! Our first good concert!”

F “The crowd actually clapped this time!”

T “No thanks to him.”

A “I didn’t do it on purpose.”

“Even though you deserved it.”

“Before she could interrogate me further, Fang grabbed Trish on the arm.”

F “Trish! Didn’t you say you wanted to set up our merch!”

“Trish winces, then gives a begrudging sigh, lowering her accusatory finger.”

T “Ugh, you aren’t worth it.”

“Trish storms off leaving Fang and I alone.”

“And Reed who was listening the entire time.”

Re “Anon, dude… you really should trust others, y’know?”

Re “It’s like they say… trust is the building block of our economy, or something.”

“What.”

Re “There are two kinds of people in this world, bro... people who believe and people who trust.”

Re “And you believed in something false, your impulsiveness.”

“Before I can begin to comprehend Reed’s capitalist sermon, my ears are assaulted by very Italian yelling.”

Moe “AY, KIDS!”

#moe now has vvurm drama apron

Moe “LOOKIT DIS ‘ERE AH-PRON YA LIL TRIGGA FRIEN SOL’ ME!”

“Reed looks almost jealous of Moe’s new garb.”

Re “Nice threads, compadre.”

??? “Hey! Someone took ma apron!”

Moe “GIT BACK TA WORK JERRY YER ON DA CLOCK!”

F “It uh… looks nice, Uncle Moe.”

Moe “Anyways, youse all gonna be helpin’ wit da clean up, right?”

“I look at the absolute mess around us.”

“Fuck.”

>>Move To Convergence point

>>Convergence Point

“An hour later and I’m stuck mopping up where the mosh pit once stood.”

“As my mop head gains a tinge of red I pray to god this isn’t from Stella.”

“Fang and Trish are trying to divide and carry out the stage.”

“...The mop really isn’t getting much from the floor.”

“Am I supposed to have a bucket or something?”

Re “Yooo, Anon!”

“Reed crosses right through the puddles, tracking grimy footprints without a care.”

Re “Hey man… what’d you think of the lyrics?”

A “What were you on when you wrote that?”

“Reed rubs his forehead, struggling to remember more than ten minutes ago.”

Re “I dunno man… the floor maybe? But I also distinctly remember floating…”

Re “Y’know, dude, we’ve been doing this since junior year, right?”

Re “And this is the first show that anyone’s actually liked.”

Re “Wild.”

A “You’ve only been playing together for a year?”

Re “You know it man, crazy how time flies.”

Re “Man, back then Trish had these crazy long horns and glasses.”

“Now there’s a thought. How would Trish even look with glasses?”

“Actually, how would glasses even work on any triceratops?”

Re “Fang wasn’t Fang.”

Re “Only thing that stayed the same was like... me and my carfe, bro.”

“How long has he been on that stuff?”

Re “It was almost like a totally different time, man.”

“Before I even got a moment to picture what it might have been like not even a year ago, Trish appears behind Reed.”

“She looks like she’s about to snap both our necks.”

T “Hey, Reed, what are you two talking about?”

Re “Just talking about some memories of the band, Trish.”

T “You didn’t tell him anything about me, did you?”

A “Glasses.”

T “Reed, you absolute ass.”

“Reed just shrugs.”

“By this point the restaurant has been mostly cleaned up with only a few tables left to put back.”

T “So Anon, we showed you ours, now it’s your turn to show us yours.”

A “What, out here in public? Didn’t peg you for the kinky type.”

“Trish inhales sharply, visibly trying to master herself.”

T “I meant with your old school.”

A “That’s on a need to know basis, and you don’t need to know.”

F “Come on Anon, don’t you have any good memories from your old school?”

“Oh god no.”

A “I’d really rather not talk about it.”

F “Why not? You’ve told me about your parents.”

“That seems to catch Trish’s attention.”

“Shit. And that look of expectancy from Fang too?”

“I guess it can’t hurt.”

A “Well… I did try to get into music at one point.”

F “With how much you need my help in music class?”

A “I didn’t say I was good at it. I was just clicking buttons and seeing what stuck.”

A “And spoiler alert, nothing did.”

“That got a giggle out of Fang and a look from Trish.”

T “By the way Anon, I saw you talking to that Stella girl before the concert. You have something going on there?”

“I feel a pit in my stomach as a look of betrayal crosses Fang’s face.”

“Right into Trish’s trap, hook, line, sinker and rod.”

A “Nyet, nein, non, nope, inai, mei yo, none of that. No.”

A “I do NOT have a thing for Incontineisha.”

Re “Who?... Thought like, we were talkin’ bout whatsherface.”

T “The one with the Dino Duel cards.”

Re “...I thought those were Pocket Raptor cards.”

F “Weren’t they handegg cards?”

A “Uh… moving on...”

T “Anyone back home you had your eye on then?”

A “Nobody at Rock Bottom was worth the time.”

“Fang’s face softens at that, almost in a silent sigh of relief.”

“Is there hope for me yet?”

T “Rock Bottom, huh? I don’t think you’ve ever told us where you’re from before.”

“...”

“SHIT.”

A “O-oh, I haven’t? Huh.”

F “Who really cares where you went to last?”

Re “Yeah, man, it’s just a school.”

F “Was it in the sticks?”

A “Not exactly, it was certainly lower class though.”

A “I used to buy bulk soda and sell them to the stupid kids for lunch money.”

Re “Yooo, my man!”

“Reed gives me a fist bump.”

A “I’d usually just go places on a crappy dirt bike, leaving donuts in parking lots when I was sure nobody was looking.”

F “Sounds like you were pretty cool at your last school.”

“HA.”

A “I dunno about that…”

Re “Sure, man… I don’t get why you left in the first place if you had it so good.”

“Oh no.”

A “Oh, uh, actually…”

“THINK OF SOMETHING THINK OF SOMETHING THINK OF SOMETHING”

A “I had to leave because of, uh…”

“DON’T SAY SOMETHING STUPID YOU ONLY GET ONE SHOT AT THIS.”

A “Family issues.”

“Nailed it.”

Re “Bummer man… glad you’re here instead.”

A “Yeah, yeah, thanks man.”

T “Sounds personal, guess we shouldn’t pry.”

T “We’re all friends here, after all.”

“Guess we are all friends at this point.”

“To varying degrees.”

“I let a content smile creep onto my face.”

Moe “AY YOU STUPID KIDS!”

“The tyrannosaur stomps over to us from the kitchen.”

Moe “Great job again on da show, punks.”

Moe “I knew my lil Lucy could pull dis shindig off.”

“He clamps one of his tiny hands down on Fang’s shoulder as she reflexively tries to hide her face with a wing.”

Moe “Alas, I’m expecting a late night visita’, so I needs you punks to piss off.”

Moe “Come on by for a slice sometime, yeah?”

A “Thanks, Moe.”

Re “Yeah man… thanks a bunch…”

Moe “Now scram youse kids. I’ve got a different kinds a clean-up ta deal wit’.”

“Aaaaaaand repressing that.”

“...”

7. anon and fang study together

A few weeks later, the student body is addressed in the auditorium about Midterms coming up by Principal Spears, and Anon convinces Fang that they should study together. They meet in an empty class after school ends, in that mimic the shot of Fang and Trish in the official game's trailer. While walking to the library, Fang notices Naomi and Naser already there, and asks Anon if they should go study at her place, and he agrees.

Back at Fang's house (with the door open) Fang grabs a guitar and starts playing a bit. Anon asks if they're studying music first and Fang says this was just how she got ready. After finishing a song, she asks Anon if he wants to try, with Anon getting the choice here to either say that 'they should get back to studying' or to 'try playing a bit'. The correct choice is to attempt to play the guitar, after which Fang laughs at Anon and shows him how to play correctly, and eventually the study session turns into a guitar lesson. At the end of the day, Fang's dad kicks Anon out of the house after they end up lying on Fang's bed.
Choosing to study has Anon tutoring Fang. While studying, Fang's mother shows up to show embarrassing photos of Fang as a baby. Fang kicks Anon out out of embarrassment.

“-A Few Weeks Later-”

“Things have cooled off since the concert back in February.”

“There’s no major events coming up, so the days have gotten longer.”

“The weather has started to warm up as well.”

“Each morning I’ve been walking through a thick blanket of fog that always dissipates by lunchtime.”

“It’s a drastic shift compared to the hot/cold binary of fly-over life.”

“Maybe I should ditch the jacket soon…”

“No, there’s no way I’m showing the world just how much of a lanklet I am.”

“Even if it means being grilled alive.”

F “Geez, Anon, you look like you’re dying right now.”

A “The sun… can go… fuck itself…”

“Fang chuckles and pats my back as I lean over my desk.”

“On second thought, tank tops seem cool. Reed is usually wearing one.”

Mr. Jingo ”Alright class, the Principal’s got something to say, then you’ll be leavin’ early.”

“With that we were all directed to the auditorium.”

“We didn’t have assigned seating, so I immediately thought of sitting with Fang.”

“Knowing better than to look through the ocean of students, I follow my nose to Reed.”

“The fetid raptor was sitting in the very last row with Trish.”

Re “YOOOOO!”

“Reed’s bellow easily eclipses everyone else.”

“I wave back, hurrying past my awestruck classmates to claim my rightful throne.”

Re “‘Ey guys… saved ya some seats.”

“I take a glance over to see Trish pouting.”

T “Fuck, he found us.”

“The last students trickle in through the doors and take their seats.”

“Mr. Carldewskii takes the stage with an electronic mic.”

Carl “Alright, settle down kids. We got a special announcement from the principal.”

Carl “We got midterms coming up soon, and he feels the need to give all of you a pep talk.”

“The audience collectively groans.”

“Fang and Trish throw their heads back.”

“On cue, Principal Spears takes the stage.”

“Mr. Carldewskii holds the microphone out to him but gets ignored.”

“The student body covers their ears in preparation.”

Sp “ALRIGHT YOU LITTLE PUNKS.”

Sp “LIKE THE MAN SAID, WE HAVE MIDTERMS TO DEAL WITH IN JUST A FEW WEEKS.”

Sp “AND I DON’T WANT TO SEE ANY OF YOU SLACKING, ONLY THE BEST EFFORTS WILL BE ALLOWED.”

Sp “THESE SCORES MAY NOT AFFECT YOUR OVERALL GRADE, SO MANY OF YOU MAY DECIDE TO DISREGARD THEM.”

Sp “IT’S A WEAK MINDSET LIKE THAT THAT CAN AND WILL TRAP YOU!”

Sp “THESE TESTS ARE FOR YOU TO SEE IF YOU’RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK OR NOT!”

Sp “I EXPECT YOU ALL TO ACE THESE EXAMS BECAUSE VOLCANO HIGH IS THE BEST SCHOOL THERE IS!”

Sp “AND I TEACH THE BEST STUDENTS THERE ARE, HERE AT VOLCANO HIGH!”

Sp “ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS?”

“Judging by the dead silence, there wasn’t any.”

“The principal gives a single approving nod and exits stage right.”

Carl “Alright you kids, you’re free to go.”

“With that the sea of students begins to funnel out of the auditorium.”

“The four of us wait until the auditorium is half empty before getting up and making our way to the door.”

“Our motley crew make it to the front lawn of the school and Reed falls flat on his back in the freshly mowed grass.”

Re “Later guys.”

“His breathing becomes a rumbling snore.”

T “So Fang, you actually gonna study?”

F “Mmmm…”

T “We can go to the library, there shouldn’t be anyone there.”

A “Eh, I don’t think I’m allowed there anymore. Wasted too much bandwidth.”

“Fuck using my own data to pirate all these games I’ll probably never play.”

T “I wasn’t asking you, douche.”

F “I kind of just wanna go home.”

T “...Kay… Talk to ya later Fang.”

F “Yeah… Later…”

T “Fuck you Anon.”

A “I didn’t even do anything this time!”

“Tch. Fuck her.”

A “Whatever. I’ll see ya on monday Fang.”

“Before I can turn away Fang’s hand catches the sleeve of my unnecessary sweater.”

F “A-actually… I was thinking…”

A “Hmm?”

“Fang’s grip loosens on my arm, leaving her hand to rest on my forearm.”

F “Wanna like, study at my place? I uh… kinda need help… with science.”

A “Suuurrrreewaaait. Wouldn’t your dad make me into a hunting trophy?”

F “I don’t think you’re that good of a catch.”

“Ow. My ego.”

F “Besides, he’s working a late shift tonight and my mom should be out clothes shopping or something. Again.”

“It’s okay Anon, you’re just going to Fang’s house.”

“Alone.”

“♪ Just the two of us. ♫”

“Bill Withers shut the fuck up holy fuck AAAAAAAA.”

A “Okay then. So how are we gonna get to your place?”

F “Shit! The bus! We can make it to the last one if we run!”

“OH GO FUCK YOURSELF BILL WITHERS.”

“We make a mad dash to the last bus.”

“I’m sweating like hell by the time we get there, made worse by the fact I’m still wearing my jacket.”

“Still must not take off.”

“Must not expose skeleton arms.”

“After a little while of being simultaneously fried alive and bathed in sweat, we finally make it to Fang’s place.”

“I obviously thank the bus driver again.”

“Wait. Alone with Fang? At her place?”

“Bill Withers begins to blare inside my head again god just fuck off FUCK.”

F “Come on, Anon. We can study in my room.”

“Fang’s room?”

“Oh, man, it’s been a while since I’ve noticed the alarms.”

A “S-sure! Lead the way.”

“Fang climbs the steps while I trail behind, weary of any hidden fathers laying in wait to ambush me.”

“She holds a door open to a pitch-black room, and I tentatively step in.”

F “Aaaaah, home sweet home.”

“Fang flips on the lights and I’m not quite sure what I expected.”

“The black walls are covered with various band posters, the spaces in between covered by what I assume are lyric ideas written in chalk.”

“A few guitar stands and a keyboard in the corner below a non-binary flag hanging on the wall.”

“Fang throws her bag off to the side and picks up a guitar, strumming a few chords.”

“I plant my hands in my pockets nonchalantly, looking around for a chair or something.”

F “Just sit on the floor, dweeb.”

A “Wow, not even a beanbag chair?”

A “What kind of lazy teenager are you?”

F “The kind that has expendable guitars in arm’s reach.”

A “Fair enough.”

“I use my backpack as a makeshift backrest.”

A “What’s the guitar for, anyways?”

F “Playing music.”

A “I mean, aren’t we supposed to be studying?”

A “Or are we doing music first?”

F “Uhm… This is just how I get ready for studying.”

F “Strumming along puts me at ease.”

“Fang picks up a spare guitar pick from a shelf.”

“She begins playing a short riff that I recognize from one of VVURM DRAMA’s songs, smiling and relaxing as she goes on.”

“Like my own personal concert.”

“When the song is finished, Fang gives an expectant glance my way.”

“I smile and give a tasteful nod.”

F “You wanna try?”

“Fang takes off the guitar strap and extends it for me to play.”

“I’m not sure what she expects me to do but I could give it a shot.”

“Though aren’t we supposed to be studying for midterms?”

Sp “THESE SCORES MAY NOT AFFECT YOUR OVERALL GRADE, SO MANY OF YOU MAY DECIDE TO DISREGARD THEM.”

Sp “IT’S A WEAK MINDSET LIKE THAT THAT CAN AND WILL TRAP YOU!”

Sp “THESE TESTS ARE FOR YOU TO SEE IF YOU’RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK OR NOT!”

“...”

“Is it really alright to slack off?”

>>Play the Guitar
>>Get to Studying

>>Play the Guitar

“What the hell.”

A “Er… why not.”

“I take the guitar from her hands and put the strap on, letting its weight hang from my shoulder.”

“Fang hands me the pick and I aimlessly strum the guitar, the mess of a noise sounding a far cry from her elegant playing.”

“Well I tried.”

F “Here, like this.”

“Fang grabs another guitar and motions me to copy her hand movements.”

“I try to mimic her hands on the fretboard but it feels like my fingers are twisting into pretzels.”

F “Not like that, your hand’s gonna get cramped as fuck like that.”

“Fang sets her guitar down on a stand and comes over to me.”

F “Holy fuck no wonder you sound like a horny cougar.”

A “Wait, like the cat or-”

F “Here, like this.”

“Her hand covers mine as she tries to readjust the position of it.”

F “No like- Gah stop fighting back!”

A “Ow hey- Quite tha- OW!”

F “Oh my fuck, Anon. Just relax your hand!”

“I would if I could but the god damned alarms weren’t freaking me out!”

F “UUUUUUUURG… Hold on.”

A “Wha-”

“Fang walks behind me.”

F “Don’t turn around!”

A “Why-”

“She’s standing right behind me!”

“She’s standing RIGHT THE FUCK BEHIND ME!”

“Her body presses against my back and her arms come around, each of her hands taking my own and guiding them into proper position.”

“...”

“AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA”

F “Anon, are you paying attention?”

A “Y-yeah! Totally!”

“I hope my voice didn’t just crack.”

“Fang’s hands move mine along the neck of the guitar.”

F “Alright, try these chords.”

“Her fingers press mine down, holding down the strings in an awkward position.”

F “Then this.”

“My hands are slid down closer to the base of the neck and too close to my crotch.”

F “And then finally this.”

“My fingers are shifted back up to the middle of the fretboard.”

F “Try that out, Anon.”

“Fang let’s go of my sweaty hands. She doesn’t move from behind me though.”

“I try and replicate the movements.”

“The first strum sounds… not bad…”

“The second note is horrendous. I blame my pants.”

“And the last chord comes out alrightish.”

F “Try it again.”

“I repeat the pattern and it comes out all sounding alrightish.”

F “Again.”

“Oh hey, that didn’t sound too bad now.”

F “You’re getting it now.”

A “Am I? I have no clue what these chords are?”

“I keep strumming, each time progressively sounding better and better.”

F “Now try playing chords of your own.”

A “My own..? I thought you were showing me how to play a song.”

F “I’m teaching you how to play guitar you dork.”

“I reposition my fingers and try something new, producing several more horrid sounds from the instrument.”

“My pinky slides off the fretboard and when I strum again a strange look appears in Fang’s eyes.”

F “Play that one again for me, will you?”

“I oblige, and repeat the note several times.”

“Fang’s tail starts wagging along with my strumming, turning into her usual metronome.”

F “...Wait...”

“She takes the guitar from me and sits on the edge of her bed, toying with the chord I was strumming.”

F “I... I think I’ve figured that song out, Anon.”

“Her tail slaps a simple beat on her mattress as she slowly builds up a rhythm in her strumming.”

“Her head bobs along, wings relaxing as the guitar’s tone starts picking up.”

“The song borne from the guitar was mesmerizing.”

“It started soft, with gentle tumbling trills, a slow jam at first, but eventually it grew into something more.”

“The crescendo crossing the strings reshaped the music, the transformation into a weightier rock piece was seamless.

“More than just fingers and a pick, it was as if Fang put her entire life’s effort into this.”

“Thinking back, she must have made countless songs like this, most of them never heard by anyone and left forgotten.”

“She soon started to hum with the song she was playing, harmony and melancholy blending with the melody,”

“As Fang poured her very being into that instrument in her hands it dawned on me what this was.”

“A lyricless ballad.”

“An instrumental aria.”

“Musical notes that bore the weight of words she couldn’t define.”

“All of which sounded beautiful, melding together into a harsh yet intoxicating piece of dissonant serenity,”

“eventually she started to diminuendo, the fading softness of strings and harshness in her humming as she slowly laid the guitar to rest.”

“The music had stopped but her own emotions warred on.”

“Fang sat there, looking down at her guitar realizing she showed me something she had never shown anyone before.”

“Fang bit back tears, fighting the sob that threatened to spill from her.”

“She sets her guitar down and slouches, rubbing her eyes and trying to repress her inner turmoil.”

“Instinct pushes me to my feet, carrying me forward to the vulnerable girl sat on plush duvets.”

“All that matters is her.”

“The part of me that felt scared at that thought, that wanted to remain isolated in my comfort zone,”

“That wanted to pretend that no one else mattered,”

“That part was ejected. Forcibly.”

“Fang gasps as I wrap my arms around her.”

F “A-Anon-“

“The frailty of her voice makes my heart ache.”

A “The song was amazing, Fang.”

“It truly was. Because it was her. Her heart and soul were carried within it. Her very being.”

“My heartfelt words reached her.”

“The dam burst.”

“She felt like a porcelain doll in my arms. Tears of sorrow and relief stain my shirt and wet my chest.”

F “thank you...thank you...thank you...”

“Unlike the rooftop Fang’s voice was a weak mumble, broken by hiccups and uneasy breaths.”

“My embrace is soft as I cradle her, soothing her with slow rocking.”

“We stayed like this, my arms calming the fragile and spent girl.”

“I have no clue how long it lasts, but Fang is able to compose herself with time.”

“I let her move away, choosing to sit next to her on the soft mattress.”

“Her eyes are puffy and red, and once again her make-up has left tracks of orange and black on her cheeks.”

“And once again she shares with me that smile.”

“But this time I can tell exactly what that soft expression means.”

“Relief.”

F “God Anon, that’s twice now...”

A “My bad. How are you feeling?”

F “...I don’t know...”

“She looks down at the guitar she set aside.”

“I lean over her lap, carefully taking the instrument by its neck and bringing it to my lap.”

A “Can you teach me?”

F “W-wha-“

A “The song. Can you teach it to me?”

“She looks at the guitar and then me. Her surprise slowly turns to happiness.”

F “Sure I can. Hold up a second.”

“She stands from the bed and goes for another one of her guitars.”

“Along the way she grabs a shirt off the floor, using it to wipe her face.”

“When she comes back Fang sits closer than before, our shoulders together.”

F “So, for the opener-“

“After what feels like hours of back-and-forth to learn guitar, my arms feel like they’re about to fall off.”

“Fang is an unexpectedly patient music teacher.”

“She ends up correcting the same mistakes I make over and over with little more than ‘dweeb’.”

“I ended up calling it quits halfway through the twentieth practice song.”

“By that point my acoustic screeching turned into something that resembles actual music.”

F “You’re no StegoSlash, buuuuut... not half bad for one lesson.”

A “I’ll take it. I fuckin’ suck creatively.”

F “Do you? You made that railgun way back when.”

A “Ah, that, that was just something I read online.”

F “Still managed to make it.”

A “Yeah but that had like, instructions and shit.”

A “Anything that needs imagination and it’s like I’m an epileptic with downs syndrome.”

F “Pffft. What about your word play?”

“...Not telling her about my shitposting needs…”

A “That’s the best I can do I guess.”

F “Hmmm…”

“Fang’s fingers trace along the strings of her waiting guitar.”

F “How bout a jam session?”

A “J-jam session?”

“Not that kinda jam session. Fuck.”

F “Yeah. Just try and play whatever.”

“And then… All hell broke loose.”

FangDad “What the HELL are you doing here, Anon?”

“Yep, that’s me. You’re probably wondering how I got in this situation.”

“Well you see, it all started with me here, in the girl I like’s room. ”

“I was learning to play guitar, maybe even getting a little good at it!”

“Then right out of nowhere, nowhere I tell you…”

“The scariest motherfucker I have ever seen in my life shows up.”

“Yep, you guessed it, it’s the lady’s dad. No warning or anything!”

“And he brought his murder weapon.”

“My life flashes before my life and my first thought is: god my life sucks.”

“The Fang bits were pretty cool I guess.”

“I at least hope someone deleted my browser history.”

“Anyways, back to the show.”

FangDad “Out. Now.”

“It takes all my strength to prevent my bladder from doing its best Stella impression right about now.”

“I silently head to the door with Judge Dredd to my back, catching a sympathetic glance from Fang on the way out.”

“Walking out the front door, I feel my heart stop as his talon-like nails begin to dig into my shoulder.”

“At that moment I learned a very important lesson.”

“PTERO-CLAWS HURT LIKE CRAP, MAN.”

FangDad “The next time I catch you alone with my daughter, I will use your head as a rubix cube.”

“He gives me a shove off the porch and I hear the door slam behind me.”

“I can hear her father’s raised voice from here.”

“Sheesh… guy needs like… all the chill pills…”

“Or maybe some Carfe…”

“God dammit Reed.”

“I turn away from the luxurious home and walk down the pathway to the sidewalk.”

“Shit. And things were getting…”

“Getting…”

“Argh, I dunno.”

“But like, after Fang’s song she was…”

“Fucking hell, why are emotions so fucking difficult.”

“As I wait at the bus stop I decide to break down everything that happened.”

“We didn’t study at all.”

“Well, maybe music I guess. Raptor Jesus, Mr. Jingo is a shit teacher compared to her.”

“But really, all I can think about is how she was after that song.”

“I saw something… something…”

“How do I fucking contextualize it.”

“In the moment I thought I knew.”

“Holding her in my arms…”

Bzzz bzzz

“A text? Shit, that’s rare.”

“Fang: Hey”

“Fang: About earlier”

“Fang: Thanks”

“Fang: For like hanging out”

“Fang: And sorry about dad”

“There was a pause, the animated ellipsis showing Fang was writing something longer.”

“Fang: About that song. I wanna work on some lyrics for it.”

“Fang: So like how about we hang out again and write some?”

“I consider my response thoroughly.”

“Anon: Sure”

“Another session like that?”

“I think of Fang, standing behind me, guiding my hands again.”

“My cheeks warm as I recall the feeling of her hands over mine.”

“Fuck… I wonder… how does she feel about me?”

“I mean, she’s shown me so much of her now.”

“And all the cheek nuzzling.”

“Just like Naser and Naomi.”

“Maybe?”

“...”

“-Two weeks later-”

“I’m looking over my final grades for this semester.”

“My science score is barely passing.”

“I want to say it’s because of Fang and mine’s ‘study sessions’.”

“Every time we would try to study it would always become jam sessions or lyric writing.”

“But I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

“Spending more and more time with her was fun.”

“And seeing this side of her.”

“It makes me feel so lightheaded, like I’m floating on clouds.”

“Although the sheet-rope escapes from Fang’s dad were starting to leave serious rugburns on my palms.”

“As a bonus, I aced Music class.”

“The midterm was a demonstration.”

“And the fact I was able to play guitar, even shittily, was enough.”

“...”

>>Move to Part 8

>>Get to Studying

“No, I should focus more on my midterms.”

A “I’d rather get started with studying, actually.”

“Fang lowers her arm with the guitar in rejection.”

A “Cmon, Fang. You know I can’t afford to waste my time here with all the money my family’s spent already.”

F “Yeah, yeah. You only got this one shot and all.”

F “Ffffffffffiiiiine. What’re we doing first?”

A “Ehh, why not science first since that’s your hardest subject.”

F “Ugh. Got a textbook?”

A “What happened to yours?”

F “Tried throwing it at Naser and it flew over the cliff.”

A “H-how? Why?”

F “I dunno, felt like it.”

F “You got a textbook or not?”

A “Yeah…”

“I retrieve the tome from my backpack, science is easily the heaviest thing in there.”

A “So, what? We take turns reading it?”

F “Too slow. Let’s just huddle and read it together.”

A “Why not just switch it back and forth?"

F “Don’t feel like it. We reading or not?”

“Fang sits beside me on the ground, Her oversized beak obscuring a good portion of the side of the page in my peripheral vision.”

“I can feel the prickle of her feathers barely brushing against my back.”

F “We’re on chapter sixteen, right?”

A “Eighteen. Are you even paying attention during class?”

F “What do you think I hang out with you for?”

“We read about electric currents in silence for a few minutes.”

“How do I know when she’s done so I can turn the page?”

“...”

A “...”

F “...”

A “You done?”

F “Oh, I wasn’t reading it.”

A “Argh, fuck you.”

F “Ha, you wish.”

“Don’treadintothat.”

A “If I read the first page out loud, would you read the second?”

F “Sure, sure.”

“Fang leans back onto the floor, hands behind her head.”

F “Get started already.”

A “Ugh.”

“In conductors, electrons are free to move around and flow easily. This is not true for insulators, in which the-”

F “*SNNNRRRRRRRRK*”

A “...Electrons are more tightly bound to the nuclei (which we'll discuss next). When current is applied, electrons move-”

F “*SNNNRRRRRRRRK*”

A “Dammit Fang, I’m trying to read to you here, cut that out.”

F “*SNNNRRRRRRRRK*”

“She really did pass out!”

“Hmm…”

A “Fang, seriously, get up or I’ll poke you.”

F “*SNNNRRRRRRRRK* mmmrrrrfooouurmooooreminuuuutes.”

A “Don’t think I won’t Fang! These guns are cocked and loaded!”

F “*SNNNRRRRRRRRK*”

“Target locked.”

“Weapons hot!”

“Battery 1!”

F “AAAAAAAAGH! THE FUCK?!”

A “Quit falling asleep during class.”

F “It’s my room, I’ll do what I want.”

A “Come on, I’m trying to take this ser-”

FangMom: “I’M HOOOOOOME!”

F “Oh no.”

FangMom: “Luuuuucy? Naaaaser? Are you here?”

FangMom: “I got your favorite, dino nuggies!”

F “Those're for Naser.”

A “Suuure.”

FangMom “Helloooo? Anyone home?”

“I hear footsteps getting progressively closer as Fang’s mother searches for any sign of life in the house.”

“A door down the hall opens.”

FangMom “Sweeeetie? Naseeeer? Oh, I guess he must be bowling with Moe again.”

F “Anon, you need to leave now.”

FangMom “Lucy, are your headphones in again?”

F “I’ll open the window, just jump!”

A “This is the second floor!”

F “Broken bones are better than-”

FangMom “OH Lucy, there you are! I didn’t realize your boyfriend was over to visit!”

“WHAT.”

“Fang’s hands cover her bright red face.”

“I wasn’t aware their beaks got red too.”

F “Mooooooom! He’s not- what did I say about knocking!”

FangMom “That you and lil’ Nassie need to knock on our door at night when it’s your parent’s ‘special’ time.”

F “Not what YOU said!”

FangMom “Oh, sweetie, that’s no way to talk to your mother. Especially in front of a guest.”

“The tiny Ptero turns to me with an apologetic smile.”

FangMom “Since you’re here, why don’t you stay for dinner?”

“Something tells me Fang’s dad would make me the dinner.”

“Beef Strog-Anon does not sound palatable to me.”

F “Actually he was just leaving. Now.”

FangMom “Oh but I wanted to show him your baby pictures!”

F “Right now in fact! He’s gonna miss his bus!”

FangMom “I have one with me right now!”

“She reaches elbow-deep into her purse and pulls out a small flipbook.”

FangMom “Oh Lucy, this is my FAVORITE little picture of you and Naser!”

“She shoves the photo in my face that I immediately make out as a bathtub with an infant Fang and Naser playing in the water.”

“Well it IS kinda cute…”

“Before I can open my mouth, Fang jabs me in the ribs.”

F “Oh my god mom, he doesn’t have time for this!”

“Fang pulls me off the ground and begins to push me towards the door.”

FangMom “Well I hope you enjoyed spending time with my little tooth fairy, Anon!”

FangMom “You’re welcome back ANY time you’d like!”

“I manage a weak wave as Fang continues to rush me towards the door in embarrassment.”

“We reach the front door and she quickly turns back inside.”

F “OkaybyeseeyouatschoolAnon.”

“I hear the door slam behind me and am left alone on the porch.”

“Well that was… interesting.”

“Guess I’ll go wait at the bus stop.”

“Does Fang’s mom really think I’m her boyfriend?”

“I know we spend a lot of time together…”

“Fang seemed REALLY quick to deny that though.”

“Does it mean anything?”

Bzzz bzzz

“A text? Shit, that’s rare.”

“Fang: Hey”

“Fang: About earlier”

“Fang: Sorry about mom”

“Fang: Just ignore anything she says”

“Fang: Also don’t tell anyone what you saw”

“Fang: ANYONE”

“Anon: ten bucks”

“Fang: I have my dad on speed dial”

“Anon: five bucks”

“Anon: lol jk”

“Fang: gobble a knob”

“Anon: see you monday.”

“Fang: see ya”

“The bus hasn’t gotten here yet.”

StreetVendor “Yo, you’re that kid with the date from before, ain'tcha?”

A “Huh?”

“I flip around to see the street vendor from a few weeks ago.”

A “You remember me?”

StreetVendor “Kid, I’ve been working this corner for the better part of two decades now.”

StreetVendor “I know how to tell faces apart.”

StreetVendor “Plus, this ain’t exactly the skinnie part of town, eh?”

A “I guess…”

StreetVendor “You just get back from another date?”

A “What? No, it was a study session- Why am I telling you this?”

StreetVendor “Yeah, a ‘study’ session.”

Street Vendor “I get ya.”

A “No, it really was just studying.”

A “Fang tried to get me to play the guitar, but I made sure to keep on track.”

StreetVendor “You WHAT.”

A “Hm?”

StreetVendor “Kids these days… She was coming onto ya, dummy!”

“Ooooooooh.”

“Fuck.”

A “...Oh.”

StreetVendor “Still, point stands.”

A “What’s that?”

StreetVendor “I was right! HA!”

StreetVendor “By the way, that wasn’t your ride, was it?”

“I look back to see the tail end of the city bus rounding the corner onto the next street.”

StreetVendor “Next one comes in forty-five minutes.”

A “...Shut up and gimme a Danger Dog.”

StreetVendor “Well, someone knows their franks.”

StreetVendor “Comin’ right up.”

“...”

“-Two weeks later-”

“I’m looking over my final grades for this semester.”

“My science score is lower than normal.”

“I couldn’t study with Fang anymore since the Mother Incident.”

“She doesn’t want me to be seen by her anymore.”

“Instead, I’ve been studying at home.”

“Got a pretty great grasp on the core subjects, too.”

“In the end, Mr Jingo screwed us over by making music midterm a live demonstration.”

“Horrid marks there. But I did get things pretty great with math and english.”

“My gpa was secured at least for whatever the fuck I decide on.”

“...”

>>Move to Part 8

8. Anon's dirty laundry gets put up to air

After Midterms, Principal Spears is addressing the senior class in the auditorium when he says that the student council has a presentation. Naomi and Naser go up on stage, and the presentation goes normally until an old picture of Anon kissing a badly photoshopped anime girl shows up onscreen. Naomi is confused and yells for Reed to skip ahead. The next several slides are more of the same. The entire senior class is laughing at Anon, who is catatonic. Naser runs to the projector and yanks the plug, and yells at Reed about what happened. Reed responds that he just played what Trish gave him. Naomi and Fang see Trish trying to make a break for it, and give chase. Principal Spears catches Trish with one hand, carrying her under his arm like a pig. He motions for Anon to follow.

Trish is being yelled at by Spears in the principals' office, and Anon and Fang are waiting outside. They can hear Spears' speech about the hubris of youth, and eventually Spears calls Anon into the office. He asks Anon for his feelings on the subject, if he's doing alright. Trish apologizes to Anon and he will get the choice to either say 'I'm sorry Trish' or 'I don't care.' Choosing to apologize for a lack of communication is the correct choice and leads to the second choice becoming available. Regardless, Spears gives a standard principal talk and gives Trish a suspension and Campus Beautification for a month. Spears tells Anon that his door is always open, and on his way out he says Anon's taste is crap and his waifu's trash, and to come see him for recommendations.

Anon leaves the principal's office, Fang is waiting outside leaning against the wall, and Trish is having her parents called. She goes to Anon looking confused, and asks how Anon's feeling. Anon responds by saying that he wants to disappear. Fang offers that they should just leave, and Anon gets the choice to either wait for Trish or to leave with Fang, with the correct choice being to wait (only accessible by getting the previous choice correctly. If the wrong choice is chosen Anon always leaves with Fang.). Choosing to wait, Anon asks Fang to go on ahead and wait outside once Trish exits the office. Trish exits the office and looks at Anon, about to burst into tears again. Trish apologizes again, and Anon will ask her feelings regarding him and Fang, since this all stems from the fact that Anon is ‘changing’ Fang. They have a dialogue where Anon is able to firmly declare his romantic feelings for Fang. The scene ends with Anon and Trish parting on neutral ground. Anon meets Fang outside, people start throwing things at him, calling him a 'filthy weeb'. Anon tries to dodge, but still gets hit with a soda can and ends up falling down a flight of stairs.

“End of midterms means the start of the new quarter.”

“Halfway through the semester, and things have been going pretty good.”

“I didn’t completely fuck up so far, and I think the rest of the band is starting to warm up to me.”

“Especially Fang.”

“In fact we’ve been hanging out more in the auditorium after school.”

“Instead of band practice we’ve been making use of that repaired projector.”

“Watching shitty movies and playing games on Reed’s Xrox.”

N “Why are you so deep in thought, Anon?”

“The Mandarin Manchurian rips me away from my monologue.”

“During homeroom, Spears came on the announcement to declare an assembly for the senior class.”

“Or in his own words,”

Sp “ASSES IN THOSE SEATS NOW!”[b]

“Naomi has taken the opportunity to walk with me through the hallways.”

A “What do you want?”

N “So I heard you and Fang went on another date the other day.”

“Of course she did.”

A “It wasn’t a date, we were just hanging out.”

“Just kickin’ Reed’s ass in Rock Ring 3.”

“Pls give mammoth bone armor.”

A “You do anything fun with Naser lately?”

N “OH! My Naser just had another track meet!”

“That always works.”

N “His high jump form is so perfect!”

N “And he looks so dazzling in his track and field uniform!”

N “...And his physique…”

“I tune her out as she covers her profusely red nose.”

“The less I can think of Naser’s body the better.”

“We get to the auditorium once again and I look to the back row to find our spot.”

“Empty?”

F “OVER HERE, ANON!!”

“Fang and Trish are sitting in the front row.”

“Next to them is Reed huddling behind a cart with the projector he’d fixed on it, messing with the cords.”

A “What’s the deal? Why are we sitting in the front all of a sudden?”

Re “Uhhhh… Spears asked me to man the projector…”

Re “First I was like ‘say whaaaaat’, but then I was like ‘yeah, man, sure’.”

Re “So here I am.”

A “I.. see...”

“I take my seat next to Fang.”

A “They say if we’re here yet?”

F “Nope.”

T “Since we’re seniors it’s probably some other stupid pep talk about ‘Our Futures’.”

Re “I bet it’s a fundraiser…”

Re “I’m like, good at selling things and stuff...”

A “I’m sure.”

A “Actually, I’ve been meaning to ask.”

A “What exactly is ‘carfe’?”

Re “You don’t know man?”

Re “Carfentanyl. The wildest stuff a dino can get.”

A “Really now?”

T “It was used in war by skinnies a while back. It’s a deadly tranquilizing agent.”

Re “It’s only deadly when you make it wrong, man.”

Re “But yeah, it’s great stuff if you know how to do it.”

A “Fang, have you ever tried any?”

F “Once.”

F “Woke up hanging upside down from a tree with Naomi’s clothes on hugging a fake skeleton.”

T “See, when I do it it just makes me a bit dizzy for a few hours.”

A “Huh. Can I see some?”

Re “Absolutely not.”

F “No.”

A “Why not?”

T “That stuff’s a hundred times more powerful than horse tranquilizer.”

T “It’d melt your skin.”

Re “Make your heart burst.”

F “I heard a human tried it once and exploded.”

T “I bet.”

A “Yeah, yeah, sure. You just don’t want to share.”

“The last of the seniors trickle in and take seats near the front.”

“Eventually Spears takes the stage.”

“He pauses to make sure everyone’s covering their ears before beginning.”

Sp “ALLLRIGHT!”

Sp “AS YOU ALL KNOW, GRADUATION’S COMING UP SOON.”

Sp “WE’RE GOING TO GO OVER THAT WHOLE PROCESS,”

Sp “BUT FIRST THE STUDENT COUNCIL HAS A BRIEF PRESENTATION TO GIVE ON THE SUBJECT.”

Sp “FLOOR’S ALL YOURS, STUCO.”

“Spears gestures his hand towards Naomi and Naser, who show up from behind the stage curtains.”

“The Chiffon Czarina brings a wireless microphone to her snout.”

“She begins reciting a well rehearsed speech in her usual snooty (heh) manner.”

“More plastic than person.”

N “Why, thank you, Principal Spears!”

“The projector comes to life, displaying a basic slideshow title card reading ‘

A “Reed, how do you know when to move it forward?”

Re “It’s when she crosses her fingers. Check it out.”

N “Now, this is a very important turning point in your life!”

“Ah, got it, It’s one of these. I needed a nap.”

“As soon as I closed my eyes I felt a malevolent force looming before me.”

“Somehow, I felt like opening my eyes was a bad idea.”

“But keeping them closed was an even worse one.”

“At least there’s cute little designs on the slides.”

“There’s a little penguin with a graduation cap…”

“There’s the school mascot in a party hat… even has the fogged up window...”

“A lineup of various graduates with a token human at the end for diversity. Typical.”

“There’s some scientists and engineers holding hands…”

“There’s a triceratops holding onto a branch with the text ‘hang in there, baby!’ (Brazilian version is Pool’s Closed but trigga’d)

(Brazilian version has humans engineer the meteor crash in order to claim global supremacy)

“There’s me two years ago when I photoshopped myself kissing an anime girl.”

“...”

“...”

“...”

“What the fuck”

“HOW!”

“WHY!”

“The world’s stopped turning. No one around me is moving and there is no sound at all.”

“Why is that here? How! I deleted everything! EVERYTHING!”

“So why the fuck is it here.”

“My body feels like stone as I try to turn.”

“To see if anyone else is seeing this.”

“In the end I can’t bring myself to move at all.”

“It doesn’t matter, I already feel their endless gazes.”

“I feel lightheaded.”

“There’s what feels like a lump of lead in the pit of my stomach.”

“There’s dark spots forming in my sight.”

“When I finally breathe again the world restarts.”

“The laughter hits first.”

“A monstrous guffaw from behind, that’s joined by every other senior in the room.”

Nas “REED CHANGE THE SLIDE, CHANGE IT NOW!”

Re “I-I am!”

“More pictures. So many more pictures.”

“Each one more and more embarrassing than the last.”

“I… oh god…”

Nas “Shit!”

“There’s a loud crash right next to me and the entire room becomes black.”

“Did I faint?”

“Is this real life? Is this just fantasy?”

F “A-anon?”

“Still awake. Fuck.”

“The lights come back on and my eyes burn.”

“The projector is on the floor, lens shards scattered all over the floor.”

“The laughter is even louder now.”

Nas “Reed how the fuck did this happen?”

Re “L-look I just used the usb Trish said-”

Nas “TRISH?! Why would Trish-”

“Trish… wasn’t in her seat.”

“In the corner of my eye I notice someone running for the entrance.”

“It’s Trish. She’s making a mad sprint for the door.”

Nas “Stop her!”

“She continues dashing towards the exit…”

“And right into Spears’ hand.”

“Literally.”

“His baseball mitt of a hand covers the… the… that fucking BITCH!”

“Covers her face entirely.”

“Even lifts her up. By her face. With one hand.”

Sp “You’re coming with me, young lady. --We’re going for a ride.”

--“Omae wa mo… shindeiru.”

--The next day, Trish’s car in the parking lot has a Trish-shaped indentation on the bonnet.

Sp “ALL OF YOU GET YOUR ASSES BACK TO CLASS.”

“Spears motions for me to follow him but I feel paralyzed by everything that just happened.”

“I bury my face in my hands and just groan.”

“This is Rock Bottom all over again.”

“ Fang tugs at my arm, trying to get me to follow.”

“I just can’t find the energy to move anything right now.”

“Fang frantically looks around at the hysterical crowd, trying to come up with something.”

“Eventually, I feel Fang put her arm over my shoulder as she tries to get me to stand.”

“She drapes her wings across my back, creating a barrier between me and everyone else.”

“Without saying a word she leads me out of a side door towards the principal’s office.”

“What the fuck just happened?”

F “Hey…”

“How is this happening to me?”

F “...You gonna be alright?”

“How did Trish find those dumb pictures?”

F “Look, don’t listen to those pricks Anon.”

“Was Reed in on it?”

F “All of them dumbasses.”

“He couldn’t be, what would he gain from something like this?”

F “Like… This’ll all blow over.”

“What would Trish gain from something like this?

F “Like, none of them talk about our shitty concert.”

“I know she doesn’t like me but this…”

F “And that was like, a fuckin’ month ago.”

“...This is fucked up!”

“I’m going to rip her stupid horns off and give her a couple new holes to breathe with!”

F “It’ll be all good Anon.”

“Think Fang’s dad had a thing going on with the golf clubs…”

“See if he can give me a couple of pointers.”

F “Just needs some time to forget it happened.”

Sp “Three MONTHS!”

Sp “THREE MONTHS from graduation and you PULL A STUNT LIKE THIS?!”

“Spears’ stern voice grilling Trish in his office rips me from my thoughts.”

“Good! She deserves it!”

Sp “I’ve half a mind to have campus security escort you out of here and send you to Reef City Continuation!”

“Fang hisses at that.”

“What the fuck does that mean?”

Sp “You have five minutes to explain why I shouldn’t do that right now.”

“I couldn’t hear Trish’s full response through the door but she was obviously crying.”

“After what SHE did?”

“Fang leaned in, trying to listen through the door to hear what the bitch was saying.”

“Because of her arms I was pulled closer too.”

“I heard the trollop’s whimpering and wanted nothing more than to really make her cry.”

T “-all HIS fault-”

“My fault?! I did fucking nothing to that purple pole-smoker.”

T “-didn’t know what else I could do-”

“Not fucking show half the school the cringiest thing I’ve ever done and commit what amounts to character assassination?!”

T “-some asshole from the sticks-”

“I’ll show that cunt some fucking sticks.”

T “-driving Fang away!”

“...What.”

“What does Fang have to do with any of this?!”

“She wasn’t the one bitching about every damn thing I do!”

“I glance over to Fang who has a pained look on her face.”

F “...”

“Looking at her this way makes a part of me feel even shittier.”

“Like I did cause this.”

“Fuck Trish though, she’s been an ass to me from the beginning!”

Sp “Anon! Will you please step into my office!”

“Spears’ voice shocks me from my eavesdropping.”

“What am I supposed to say to Trish?”

“Fang tries to give a reassuring smile but it’s so fragile.”

“Like this is all her fault and not that backstabbing bitch.”

“I enter Spears’ office and my eyes are immediately drawn to Trish sitting in front of his desk surrounded by crumpled up tissues.”

Sp “Trish, is there anything you would like to tell Anon?”

“I’ve never seen her like this.”

T “It’s all your fault.”

T “Who are you to come here and take Fang away!”

T “You’re just some nobody from the middle of nowhere who only cares about yourself!”

T “I helped pull Fang out of their shell”

“And made her a social pariah in the process.”

T “My band was doing great before you came here!”

“I set up the only successful show you ever played.”

T “And then you show up and start manipulating everyone!”

T “Because you’re a selfish control freak!”

T “Everything has to revolve around you!”

--“Oh, Venerable Pot, allow me to introduce Lady Kettle. Lady Kettle, this is Venerable Pot. I think the two of you will get on like a house on fire!”

T “Fang and Reed and me were going to make it to the top!”

T “But you stole everything from me because you didn’t understand us!”

T “No one understands us!”

“Trish is cut off by a horrid sob, her head falling into her hands and new tears spilling from her eyes.”

“Raptor Jesus on his cross of rock that’s a lot to unpack.”

“It’s like you didn’t even try to understand me either.”

Sp “Anon, is there anything you want to add?”

“Like how she’s not worth the oxygen?”

“But if this really is all about Fang…”

>>Talk with Trish

“I turn to the pitiable purple punk-rocker.”

Sp “You are not the only person in the world.”

“I… Think I finally get it…”

A “Look, Trish. Maybe we didn’t start off right. And yeah, I can be an asshole.”

“She looks up at me, surprise written on her absurdly moist face.”

A “I didn’t mean to drive you and Fang apart or anything. I just want to be Fang’s friend.”

A “But after what you fucking did. Fucking digging up my past? Airing it to every senior?”

A “And all for Fang? She’s outside the door thinking this is all her fault!”

“That got a response from Trish.”

“Her head dipped down and her fingers curled into the hem of her hoodie.”

A “Maybe it’s your fault for being such a bitch.”

A “Maybe it’s mine. I don’t know.”

A “But it sure as shit isn’t Fang’s!”

“Another choked sob racked her body and the tears started anew.”

A “...I’m sorry for being a poor friend to you. But after what you did? I don’t know if I can forgive that.”

“Spears nods in approval, a fatherly grin stretching his cheeks.”

Sp “That was well said, son. You’ve come a long way since your first day.”

Sp “You can leave. Take the rest of the day if you need it.”

“I rise from my chair and make for the door.”

“But I’m stopped by what Trish just muttered.”

T “s’my fault… m’sorry.”

“...”

A “You should tell that to Fang.”

>>Move to Convergence A

>>Ignore Trish

A “No, I’ve got nothing.”

“Spears sighs at that like he expected me to add something more.”

“What was I supposed to say?”

“Forgive her and act like nothing happened?”

Sp “Well, Anon, I can’t really say I blame you after all of that.”

“Trish remains silent, her eyes locked on the floor.”

Sp “You can go home for the day if you need to.”

>>Convergence A

“Right before I clamp my hand on the doorknob, Spears speaks up.”

Sp “Oh, and Anon. Don’t think I didn’t notice.”

“Uh oh.”

“I slowly turn back to him.”

Sp “...”

A “...”

Sp “Your waifu is trash and your taste is shit.”

Sp “My door is always open so I can share some quality anime.”

“What.”

“I open the door to see Fang again, expression complex, leaning against the door’s frame.”

F “Hey.”

“A heavy sigh escapes my lips.”

A “Hey.”

F “... How you feeling?”

A “I’d frankly like to just disappear right now.”

A “... I think I’ll just go home.”

F “I uh... can ditch. If you need me to come with.”

“Fang looks at the door to Spear’s room for a bit, then back to me.”

“Trish is probably having to call her parents right now.”

“Fang probably heard everything in the office.”

>>Choice 2, only if point gained from choice 1
>>Wait for Trish to exit the office

A “You worried about her, too?”

“Fang turns her head down to her shoes.”

F “...”

F “How could I not tell something like this was happening?”

A “You know it’s not your fault.”

F “Doesn’t mean I don’t feel guilty about it.”

“She picks her head up to look me in the eye.”

F “We should leave... you probably don’t want to see her when she gets out.”

A “Actually, I think we should wait. Looks like you have something to say to her.”

F “Well, yeah, but…”

A “There’s something else I wanted to tell her, too.”

F “There is?”

F “You sure you should be talking to her when you’re still this upset?”

A “It’s nothing bad, promise.”

F “Mmmmm…”

A “You can go first.”

“Fang gives a small nod, and we slide down the wall into sitting positions.”

“The minutes pass.”

F “What do I even say to her…?”

A “...”

“I’m not entirely sure either.”

“The clasped hands around my knees start to leave red marks on each other.”

“I can’t find the energy to shift them.”

“Aeons later, Trish emerges from the office.”

“Her tears have become shiny trails reflecting the sterile light of the hallway.”

“Hesitantly, Fang gets up to speak with her.”

“That makes one of us.”

“For a while, the two just stare at each other.”

“Eventually…”

F “...Why?”

F “Why the fuck did you do this to Anon?”

F “Do you actually think I’d be okay with this?”

F “Anon is just as much my friend as you or Reed!”

F “That was something those douchebags who make fun of our band would do.”

T “...I thought he was a bad influence...”

T “...On you… the band…”

T “Everything is changing, Fang, and I don’t like it.”

T “All because of Anon.”

F “Then why didn’t you just fucking talk to us?”

F “Anon isn’t some asshole trying to rip everything apart.”

T “I know what you told me, Fang, but like…

T “But you deserve better, he’s not-”

“I catch Trish throwing a glance my way as she cuts herself off.”

T “Look, I’m sorry Fang. I'm just looking out for you.”

F “Look out for me? I can make my own decisions, Trish.”

“Fang sighs and rubs her temples.”

F “...I’m taking a break from the band.”

“I watch as Trish’s entire world shatters before her eyes.”

T “W-what?”

F “I need time to think…”

T “Fang wait-”

F “Bye.”

“Fang turns away from Trish and starts walking away.”

F “I’ll wait by the exit while you talk, Anon.”

“...”

“And now it’s just the two of us.”

“I get up from my spot on the floor, pins and needles in my legs making it more difficult.”

T “...Now what do you want?”

A “I fucked up too.”

“That catches her off-guard.”

A “This is my fault too, ya know? I played a stupid game with this instead of manning up and just talking about it.”

“I stone the fuck up and finally admit it. To the world and myself.”

A “I like Fang. I like her and I know that’s what you’re afraid of.”

A “I was never out to break anything up, I just like Fang. I want to help her.”

A “I never wanted to hurt anyone.”

“Trish’s eyes glaze over and stare at something in the distance, as if all her worst fears came true.”

“I guess in a way they did today.”

A “I’m done, Trish. I’m not going to fight with you over this.”

A “I won’t fuck with you, you won’t fuck with me.”

--A “suc my cawk thru my jorts lol”

A “I’m going home.”

“I turn away from Trish as she buries her head in her hands again.”

“Part of me wonders if she’ll use that against me, but right now it just feels good to get it out of my system.”

“I catch up to Fang near the front of the school as I mentally prepare myself for what’s coming.”

>>move to convergence B

>>Go home early

A “Sure, let’s get out of here.”

“We make our way to the front of the school as I mentally prepare myself for what’s coming.”

>>Convergence B

“Time for the Walk of Shame.”

“As I make my way through the hall I do my best to ignore the passing jeers from teens I don’t even know.”

“I guess it’s already spread to the lower years too.”

“Fucking lightspeed capable rumor mill.”

??? “HEY DO THE NARUTO RUN.”

??? “Look at the pathetic weeb.”

??? “How’s your 2D girlfriend Anon?”

??? “Hey Anon, need to borrow a jar?”

St “Your waifu is great and I love her!”

A “Not helping, Stella.”

“I keep my head down, avoiding the looks from them all.”

“Shouldering open the door I’m blinded by the morning sun’s glare.”

-->Even God is looking down on Anon right now

“Within an hour I’ve fallen back to square one.”

“Is it too late to transfer to another school?”

“Fang steps to the stairs, phone in hand.”

F “I can call us a taxi or something, Anon.”

“I nod at that, moving for the stairs.”

??? “HEY LOSER, THINK FAST!”

“I turn towards the voice, and the world slows down.”

“My field of vision is filled with a soda can, and I freeze up like a deer in headlights.”

“The can smacks me in the forehead while I was mid-stride, and I shift my footing to try and regain balance.”

“Except my foot catches on the edge of the stairlip and slips, and I begin a long tumble down.”

[Falling animation and CGs here]

“...”

A “uuurg.”

??? “Oh fuck, we need to split before the Caveman gets here!”

--??? “I haven’t paid off my jeep yet!”

F “ANON!”

“My lungs feel like they’re on fire.”

“I think my feet touched the back of my head.”

“I peel myself from around the bollard, feeling every bone in my body creak painfully.”

A “Argh… Fuck.”

F “Holy shit! You’re alive!”

A “Am I? Ow.”

“Nothing seems to be broken… I’ve been in worse.”

“Honestly my ego’s more injured than I am.”

F “Can you walk?”

A “Yeah, sure, sure.”

A “This’s nothing compared to field day back at my old school.”

“I try taking a step and my knee involuntarily twists in a direction it’s not supposed to.”

“Suddenly, I’m doing the seth mcfarlane pose again.”

F “Oh no. Ohhh no. Let me help you up.”

“She tucks her arms around my shoulder and pulls me to my feet again.”

F “Let’s just get to the bench over there.”

F “The taxi will be here in like five minutes.”

--“Been a while since my kneecap dislocated.”

--And people wonder why I have a crippling fear of archers.

“Using Fang as a second foot, I eventually make it to the bench.”

“I still can’t bend either leg, so I just sort of splay against the sidewalk.”

“Fang sits on the other end and starts digging through her pockets.”

F “Uhh… I think I heard somewhere that nicotine relieves a bit of pain... “

A “Yeah… I could use a smoke… right about now.”

“Fang retrieves one of the cigarettes from the crumpled pack and sparks it to life with her pink lighter.”

“She takes the first draw, then hands it to me.”

"I inhale slowly, my chest aching as my lungs fill with wonderfully numbing nicotine.”

“The minty taste and the cool sensation settling over my skin does help to relax my painfully tense muscles.”

“Before I know it the cigarette in my fingers is nothing but a smoldering filter.”

F “Looks like our ride’s here.”

“A grimy beater of a taxi pulls up to the curb, driven by an equally grimy velociraptor.”

“Clearly one of the three left operating in the city.”

“Fang helps me to my feet and over to the cab, opening the door so I can shamble in.”

Driver “...Shit, kid, you look like you got into a fight with a steamroller and lost.”

A “Mmm.”

Driver “Now where’re you kids heading on a school day? Maybe the hospital?”

A “Home.”

Driver “Sure thing kid. Got the address.”

A “...Two-thirty-seven South St. Hammond street.”

“The driver sucks in a breath through his teeth.”

Driver “Skin Row, eh? Well I can take you s’far as the edge of the neighborhood, deal?”

A “Yeah, whatever. Just take me home…”

“The cab speeds off away from the school.”

F “...I still can’t believe that Trish would do something like that.”

“The cab driver lets out a laugh.”

Driver “You got your ass handed to you by a girl, didn’t you?”

“I don’t bother responding while Fang kicks the back of his seat.”

Driver “Yeah, yeah, I didn’t want a tip much anyways…”

F “Why doesn’t the driver want to drive all the way to your place?”

F “It can’t be that bad, right?”

A “Uhhh… That reminds me.”

A “Hold this… for me.”

“I toss my pocket knife into Fang’s lap, she looks at me with a nervous smile like she expects a punchline.”

F “...”

F “...Oh.”

A “Joking… kinda…”

A “Haven’t needed to shiv someone yet...”

“Talking hurts, breathing too.”

“Each breath I take feels like my ribs are gonna shatter.”

“Fang must have noticed since she kept silent after that.”

Driver “Alrighty, end of the line.”

Driver “That’ll be fifteen bucks even.”

A “There’s still a few blocks we gotta walk.”

“I manage to limp out of the car and Fang drops a few crumpled bills in her seat and slams the door behind her.”

“The car peels out and disappears around the corner.”

A “Well, no place to go but home.”

F “Wait, you still can’t walk, right?”

“I can probably make it a good fifty yards.”

F “Hang on, give me your shoulder.”

A “No, don’t worry abou-”

“Ignoring my protests, Fang wraps my arm around her back for support.”

F “Where are we going?”

A “Uhh… First turn is a right up here…”

“Wait… Fang is coming over to my place?”

“Fang is coming over to my place?”

“Fang is coming over to my place?”

“I don’t want her to see how I live!”

“...”

“Crap, did I leave Saturnia on?”

“...”

8.25 an excellent reason to start abusing mod powers
Anon and Fang walk back to Anon’s shitty gamer lair of an apartment. He’s covered in soda, holding a hand over his chest, his breathing more difficult and he’s walking with a very noticeable limp. Midway home to his apartment Fang stops Anon to check on his leg, and she sees it’s at least a twisted ankle. She takes his arm over her shoulder for assistance and the walk becomes more awkward for Anon. At his shitty building Anon and Fang struggle to get up the stairs to his room, and a tired and worried Fang drags Anon straight to his bed. She starts stripping him but Anon stops her and does it himself in the bathroom, cleaning himself and checking for bruises. He comes back and she helps him lay down.

As Fang is treating Anon’s injuries he starts to relax and enjoy the feel of her hands putting bandaids and rubbing ointment on him. They talk as this goes on, Fang about how she’s sorry that this happened, how she’s pissed at Trish etc etc. On the two good endings, she leaves the band here. Anon tries to play it off which upsets Fang and she accidentally applied too much pressure on a bruise causing him pain. Fang says it matters to her and reveals she cares a lot about Anon. Anon and Fang confess in this scene, and it ends with Fang and Anon laying together on his tiny

bed holding each other.

A “Hang on, lemme get my key…”

“I awkwardly fish around for it in my pocket, hand weighed down by some cheap first aid stuff from the nearby liquor store.”

A “This stuff wasn’t nece-”

F “Shut up.”

F “Open the door.”

--“Reev me… I mastu composu mai desu haiku beforu I commitu sudoku…”

“I finally managed to find my key wedged between my leg and wallet.”

“Fang takes the key from me and opens the door before I can think to throw it out the broken window nearby.”

“Welp. No turning back now.”

--A “Welcome to Brazil.”

A “Welcome to Casa Del Shithole, occupancy a miserable weeb.”

“Raptor Jesus threw me a bone at least.”

“There’s no dirty dishes stacked in the sink.”

“The trash is mostly empty save for a discarded box of cereal.”

“And my monitor is NOT displaying something Saturnia related.”

“The entrance isn’t big enough for both Fang and I, so I leave her supporting shoulder and limp my way to the twin-sized mattress on the floor.”

“It’s so tempting to just drop face-first like usual, but I don’t think I’d survive the shock of the fall.”

F “...Nice place…?”

A “You don’t have to stay. I just wanna curl up in bed and sleep my sorrows away.”

F “Anon it’s ten in the morning.”

A “And?”

F “And you’re fucking hurt. At least let me try and patch you up.”

A “You do-”

“Fang’s glare makes my mouth click shut.”

“Fang sets the bag of ice packs, icy hots, and sabre balm on my computer desk when something catches her eye.”

F “Is… Is that the phone roomba you bought a while back? You actually kept that thing?”

“Fang is standing over the shoebox I’ve been using to hold my ‘pet’.”

“I’ve put in a few wooden blocks for it to bump around.”

A “Uhh, yeah. Can you go ahead and feed him for me?”

F “...With this box of cornflakes?”

A “Yeah… Two or three will do.”

F “...And you taped your railgun to the top of it.”

A “If you look close I gave him angry eyebrows too.”

--Metal Gear RAYmba looks at me as if in response, and RULES OF NATURE blared out from the shitty bluetooth speakers I taped to the back.

F “Why?”

A “Mom never let me have a pet. And he’s cute.”

F “He?”

A “Don’t make fun of metal gear RAYmba or else he’ll shoot you.”

F “...”

A “He’s armed with tiny angry marine munitions.”

F “...”

“Fang crumples up some of the flakes and pours the crumbs into RAY’s box.”

“I can hear it happily ingesting breakfast from my bed.”

F “You are such a dweeb, Anon.”

“There’s no heat in her words.”

“Fang turns to me, the small tub of disgusting green stuff in hand.”

F “Alright, let me see where you’re hurt Anon.”

-- A “K.”

--I drop my trousers.

“...”

--A “You’re looking at it. I’m a walking bruise right now.”

“No way in fuck.”

F “Now.”

“Shit. When did Fang learn the patented Mom Glare.”

F “Take off your shirt.”

--A “Fang, please stop trying to give me a rim job, my ribs hurt, my knees look like Xavier's and my left lung stopped working.”

A “Wait wha-”

F “Take it off or I’ll cut it off with your knife.”

A “...Fine...”

“I walk over into my bathroom and start taking my shirt off. I look crummy and beat up. Scratches and bruises all across my --Perfectly toned and absolutely ripped chest --YEAAAAAAAAAAA”

“I step into my tiny shower stall and turn on the water.”

“The shower head sputters before it starts weakly spraying lukewarm water.”

“The temperature of the water doesn’t help the tension in my muscles or the bruises marring my skin.”

“I stretch around and see massive blotches of purple and black splattered across my torso.”

[CG of Fang examining the room, maybe holding RAYmba like a comfort pet]

“Each contusion is hot to the touch under my fingers and the pain is intense.”

“The worst is across my chest where the bollard hit me.”

“I eventually get finished examining my wicked wounds and step out of the bathroom. Fang is on her phone doing Raptor Jesus knows what.”

“Fang then pats the bed”

F “Come here”

“I walk over and lie down on my stomach”

F “Jesus that's bad...”

“I then felt a cold cream and soft touch on my back, along with a massive jolt of pain”

A “FUCK!”

--F “Suck it up, pussy.”

F “Shit, sorry! Are you okay?”

A “Yeah, just didn’t expect it to hurt that bad...”

F “Just try to relax.”

“I sigh and try my hardest not to freak out when she touches me”

“I don’t know what's worse, the fact Fang --A REAL FEMALE GIRL is touching me or the intense pain.”

“She eventually finds a sweet spot of pressure to apply. It still hurts a little, but it doesn’t cause me to wince.”

“Her hands are soft.”

“I find myself relaxing under Fang’s ministrations.”

F “Starting to feel better now?”

“I nod.”

“My eyes feel heavy as the ointment begins to warm up, drawing away tension from my aching muscles.”

“I can make out a steady thumping on my bed”

“My senses fade more until all I’m aware of is Fang’s fingers tracing circles over my sore back and the sound of thumping.”

“I wonder what that is.”

“Fang’s hands slow to a stop and eventually pull away, leaving me disappointed.”

--“I bust out my kazoo and play along.”

“The bed shifts.”

F “Anon.”

“There’s something in her voice, but I can’t discern it.”

A “Hm?”

F “I need to do the front.”

“Oh.”

“Okay then. I roll over onto my back.”

“And find myself face to beak with her.”

“Dangerously close.”

“I can feel her breath on my lips and I blush.”

“It never even occurred to me that I could apply the ointment on myself.”

“I want to look aside.”

“Turn my face away to hide the growing blush.”

“But I can’t.”

“I’m entranced looking into Fang’s warm amber eyes.”

“Millions of words flash through my head as I try to find something to say.”

“Fang is looking right back.”

“Eyes that seemed to glow with what little sunlight filling the room stared into mine.”

“I wonder…”

“I hope…”

“Do you like me, Fang?”

F “A-anon…”

“I’m pulled out of my thoughts by her voice.”

“Fang’s blushing heavily too, now.”

“And her tail is positively hammering away at my bed.”

“Wait.”

“Oh fuck.”

“Did I?”

A “I- um… w-was that… did I say-“

F “Y-yeah…”

A “Ffffffffff-“

“My head sinks back into my pillow.”

A “-fffffffffuck.”

“A snort escapes from Fang’s beak.”

F “You’re such a fucking dweeb…”

“Her fingers brush lightly across the largest bruise on my chest, without ointment.”

F “You mutter from time to time. I didn’t start noticing til our… d-date…”

“I groan aloud.”

“So the entire time…”

F “Yeah… It’s uh… kinda cute…”

A “Raptor Jesus on his cross of rock. So for months now-“

F “I’ve known. And…”

“Fang leans over me with her hand braced next to my head in support.”

F “I… like you too…”

“Fang’s hand moves back to my chest, resting just over my machine-gun beating heart.”

“Her head slowly descends toward mine.”

“And before we can start trying to figure out how Human-Dino tonsil hockey is played.”

“Fang’s weight begins to press down behind her hand.”

“Which is dead center of the most serious bruise on my chest.”

A “FUCK!”

F “Oh shit sorrysorrysorry-“

A “Haaaah.”

“I manage to catch my breath.”

A “I’m okay. Just… ow…”

“My hand wraps around Fang’s.”

A “M-maybe uh… something else?”

A “That won’t stress these.”

“I nod at the blemishes across my chest.”

F “Er… liiiiike…?”

--A “lmao wanna fuck”

A “Liiike…Hug? Maybe? I don-“

“I’m cut off by Fang moving closer to me again.”

“Her arm shifts, moving from my chest to my shoulder.”

“Her wing drapes over both of us, becoming a soft and warm blanket of feathers.”

“And her head lands next to mine, sinking into our now shared pillow until I’m eye to eye with her.”

F “Cuddling it is.”

“I smile and nod.”

“Even if Fang is now laying atop my arm and I’m starting to lose feeling in it.”

“The feel of her warm body pressed against my side is definitely worth it.”

“And between that warmth and the plush wing-blanket, my eyes grow heavy again.”

“Fang’s already started to snore, right into my ear.”

“Ah, fuck it. I close my eyes and decide that sleeping with Fang is easily the best thing to happen to me.”

--[Lewd CG of Fang in bed here]

--“Not like that damn it.”

[Actual cuddling CG here]

“Ah, there… we… gooo…”

-- A portal opens up below us and transports us directly to Brazil.

“Zzz”

“...”

-- I dream about snoy boy piss sex penis dupe
8.5 school assignment
One month later Anon and Fang are in science together when an announcement given by Principal Spears reminds the student body that Prom is in a month and tickets will be on sale soon. The teacher then passes out another partner assignment, and Fang and Anon naturally pick each other.

“April first.”

“Me and Fang have been together for a month now.”

“And right now I’m gonna win our prank war.”

“She may have gotten me with that stupid kiss prank.”

“How the hell she found a mouse trap that small I’ll never know.”

“But I got her a special Pachy treat for her today.”

“For once I can use my weebiness for the greater good.”

A “Hey Sweet Tooth.”

“Fang groans at the pet name. Honestly that hurt me to say too.”

“I considered using her mom’s pet name but after the last time, I didn’t want to tempt her.”

“Phase one complete, she’s too distracted to check the box in my hand.”

A “Wanna play the pocky game?”

F “How do you play that?”

A “Well, I hold one of these,”

“I take one of the green sugary sticks from the box and hold the plain end by my teeth.”

A “bhetween mah teef. Den joo haff too take it wiff yer lips.”

A “an’ try an’ bite as ‘uch as joo can wiffout touchin’ my fashe.”

“Fang narrows her eyes at that, and then cautiously moves her head towards mine.”

A “It’sh jush shocola’e!”

“She moves in and crunches down on the pocky stick centimeters from my face.”

“Jackpot.”

“Her face contorts almost immediately and she spits it out on the floor.”

F “...What the fuck is that?! Where did you even get those?”

“I barely contain my laugh as Fang downs the rest of her coffee to get the taste out of her mouth.”

A “Let’s just say Stella gets all sorts of weird snacks from Japan.”

A “...Like wasabi pocky sticks.”

--F “WHY YOU LITTLE…!”

“Fang looks ready to strangle me but I still have one card left to play.”

--A “You’ve activated my trap card, you third rate duelist with a fourth rate deck!”

A “Hey, I have amnesty for today, April Fools! Payback for the mousetrap from the other day."

-- “I default dance and then dab on her to assert my superiority.”

“She growls at that and jabs me in the shoulder. I guess I deserve that much.”

“Before I can make my retort, an announcement comes in over the speakers.”

--Sp “LAAAAAADIIIEEEES AND GEEEEEENTLEMEN!”

Sp “ALRIGHT EVERYONE LISTEN UP!”

Sp “NEXT MONTH! WILL BE WHAT IS POSSIBLY THE HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR TIME HERE AT VOLCANO HIGH!”

Sp “PROM! THAT’S RIGHT I SAID IT! TOMORROW WE WILL BE SELLING FUCKING TICKETS TO PROM!”

Sp “SO GET THOSE FORMAL FUCKING OUTFITS READY!”

“The P.A. system’s ending chime ushers in a moment of complete silence.”

“Then, all at once the chatter starts.”

??? “Ohmanohmanohman, I gotta ask him to go with-”

??? “-I even have a dress good enough for-”

??? “-tickets are pretty expensive, I’ll pass this-”

“Everyone seems excited about the sudden news.”

-- “I just wanna stay home and play vidya.”

“Prom, huh…”

“I guess I wouldn’t mind going if it’s with Fang.”

“What would she wear?”

“Actually, scratch that, what would I wear?”

“I can’t afford a decent outfit… Maybe I’ll mail home and ask Dad for his old suit.”

“Couples tickets are like a hundred bucks, too.”

“I’m sure I could make it work if I needed to.”

A “Hey Fa-”

Fernsworth “Settle down students!”

Fernsworth “There will be plenty of time to scheme your night of debauchery later!”

Fernsworth “We still have the lesson to get through, finish this and then chatter all you need.”

“The class collectively throws their heads back to groan.”

Fernsworth “Oh, fiddlesticks. It’s only two pages of particle physics.”

F “You have a spare railgun in your backpack?”

“Professor Fernsworth passes out the assignment and returns to his desk for a quick nap.”

“Particle physics isn’t too hard, more tedious than anything.”

“I should finish pretty quickly unless something comes up.”

F “Anon, remind me, what’s a quark again?”

“Oh right.”

“Lab partners.”

“...”

8.5a (fang desperately wants to win prom night)
While working, Fang stops Anon and tells him that they have to prove their music is good enough. Fang is deadly serious here.

“I help Fang through the first few questions until she says she has a good grasp on the concept.”

“Eventually I’m able to focus on my own work again, making steady progress through the remaining problems.”

“My mind wanders back to the idea of going to prom.”

“I honestly don’t feel like going.”

“Maybe Fang will feel the same about skipping prom and just going to the beach or something.”

-- Replace ‘the beach’ with ‘snurch’.

A “Hey Fang. Do-”

“Something’s off with Fang, she’s gazing vacantly into space.”

“Her worksheet lies untouched in front of her.”

A “... Fang?”

-- “I snap my fingers in front of her snoot a couple of times to get her attention.”

F “... I’ve decided.”

A “Huh?”

F “VVURM DRAMA has to play for the school at prom.”

F “It’s the only way that everyone will finally see our talent.”

A “Wait, your band? But I thought you broke off last mon-”

F “Oh, don’t worry about that.”

F “Trish called with the idea last night and I apologized!”

A “I-wait, you apologized?”

F “Thinking about it again, leaving the band was something of an overreaction on my part.”

A “Overreaction? But she-”

F “Trish has been my friend for a long time, and I shouldn’t have been so harsh on her.”

A “Uh… ye-”

F “So the band’s back together!”

F “Isn’t that great!?”

A “I-I, uh, sure?”

F “So you’ll go to prom to help us play, right?”

“So much for avoiding it. Fuck me.”

A “Guess I don’t have much of a choice.”

A “You sure about Trish though?”

A “She proba-”

F “Oh, you can apologize to her at lunch today.”

A “Wh-buh… What?!”

A “Why in the seven fucks would I apologize to her?”

A “The janitors have stopped washing my locker since it just gets more dicks drawn on it every day!”

A “There’s more dicks on my locker than in a pride parade for fucks sake!”

-- A “Even the Japanese transfer student got in on it, he keeps writing “ochinchin wa daisuki nan dayo!”, whatever the fuck that means!”

F “It’s easier than just letting it boil, right?”

F “You should be more willing to forgive people.”

F “Come on, we both have limited friend groups.”

F “We can’t afford to burn bridges when we can just accept things, right?”

“...”

“When she puts it like that…”

A “I… Whatever. Fine.”

“But how she put it.”

“Maybe it’s just me, but she seems a little…”

“Frantic.”

F “Ohh, thank you so much Anon!”

F “I’ll start looking for a good suit to wear!”

“Fang yanks her phone out and starts looking through an online catalogue of androgynous formal wear.”

“Well, this can’t be a good sign.”

“Highlight of our time here at Volcano High indeed.”

(move to part 9)
8.5b (anon gets fangs' pronouns right, and she's smug about it)
While working, the teacher approaches Anon and Fang and asks if they're doing well on the project, and if he's getting along well with Fang. He responds with 'Fang's doing well, I'm getting along with them.', and Fang acts smug about Anon choosing to respect her pronouns in front of other people. Anon asks Fang out to Prom, and she declines, citing that Prom is for posers and losers. She instead invites Anon to the beach on that night.

“About fifteen minutes into the assignment, the two of us are just about done.”

“We’re making surprisingly good time.”

F “Uhm… and you said that the electrons hold the negative charge, right?”

A “Yeah, yeah.”

F “Can’t imagine when I’d be using this crap in real life.”

A “You never know, you might shrink one day.”

F “Yeah, and you might stop pretending you’re livestreaming on Yousnoot.”

A “As far as you know I might be giving you incorrect answers, you know.”

F “Mhm, sure.”

“The teacher is making his rounds checking on the students and gets to our desks.”

Fernsworth “Hello, Anon. Fang.”

Fernsworth “Are you two getting along well?

A/F “Yes, Mister Fernsworth.”

Fernsworth “Great to hear.”

Fernsworth “You know, I’m real proud of you two.”

Fernsworth “I remember at the start of the year you were at each other's' throats.”

Fernsworth “And now look at you!”

“The two of us cringe.”

A “Uhh… Yeah, thanks.”

Fernsworth “At any rate, you two understand the material, right?”

A “Oh yeah, Fang and I are fine.”

A “I was just helping them with a few problems.”

“Phew, remembered it this time.”

Fernsworth “Good, good.”

Fernsworth “I won’t keep you any longer then.”

“Fernsworth meanders to pester the next few students.”

A “Anyways, where were we?”

“I turn back to see Fang giving me a raised eyebrow and a smug grin.”

F “So…”

A “Hm?”

“Fang’s wrist hovers before my face.”

“With the weird non-binary bracelet.”

“Wait wha-”

F “Heh. See, you can learn, Anon.”

“Oh.”

“OH!”

“Oh god she’s still on about that?!”

“...She does seem pretty serious about it.”

“We’ve been friends long enough…”

“I guess it’s the least I can do to start going along with it.”

F “I didn’t realize you were Pan, Anon.”

A “Pan? Wait, what does a Raptor William’s movie have to do with this?”

F “No, dummy! You’re Pansexual!”

A “I’m sorry, what?”

F “You’re Pan!”

F “That means you’re willing to date people regardless of identity!”

“Do I come off as that desperate…?”

F “I’m an enbie, you recognize me, we’re dating, therefore you are Pan!”

“Fang deserves a gold medal at the mental gymnastic olympics.”

“Even the French would give that routine a ten outta ten.”

“Aaaaanyways….”

F “Mumblin’ again.”

A “...Prom! You uh.. Wanna actually like… go? Together?”

“Ugh, which is worse, the panny stuff or prom?”

F “mmmm… naaaaah.”

F “Prom is like… so lame, ya know?”

A “O-oh. Yeah, I get ya. Not to mention a waste of money.”

F “Yeah. Money better spent on actual good stuff.”

A “Like carfe?”

“In the distance I can hear Reed rebuffing my attempt to try his product.”

F “Yeah. And booze.”

A “Yeah totally. Like, prom cash is way better spent on fun stuff like liquor.”

F “In fact, we totally should.”

A “Should what?”

F “Have our own prom! Just the two of us! With booze!”

“I consider the idea for a moment.”

“Just Fang, me and a few dozen cans of beer somewhere.”

A “Fuck yeah!”

F “Fuck yeah!”

Fernsworth “Quiet down, you in the back.”

A “Oops.”

A “Crap, the assignment!”

F “You’re still worried about that?”

“I flip the page over to reveal the second half, which we only have about ten minutes to finish.”

F “It’s just the one assignment, and there’s already no way you can finish, right?”

F “Just relax, take a break now and then.”

“I worriedly glance at the page again.”

“Maybe she’s... they’re right.”

A “Alright, sure.”

“The two of us continue making plans up to the bell, and I toss the paper out when I leave.”

“...”

8.5c (anon gets fangs' pronouns right, but she tells him she's okay with being called a girl.)
While working, the teacher approaches Anon and Fang and asks if they're doing well on the project, and if he's getting along well with Fang. He responds with 'Fang's doing well, I'm getting along with them.', Fang acts demure about Anon saying that, telling him she's okay with being called a girl now. (maybe still include Fang having a real name point). Anon invites Fang to Prom and Fang gleefully accepts.
NOTE Also have Fang reveal her real name to Anon here.

“About fifteen minutes into the assignment, the two of us are just about done.”

“We’re making surprisingly good time.”

F “Uhm… and you said that the electrons hold the negative charge, right?”

A “Yeah, yeah.”

F “Can’t imagine when I’d be using this crap in real life.”

A “You never know, you might shrink one day.”

F “Yeah, and you might stop pretending you’re livestreaming on Yousnoot.”

A “As far as you know I might be giving you incorrect answers, you know.”

F “Mhm, sure.”

“The teacher is making his rounds checking on the students and gets to our desks.”

Fernsworth “Hello, Anon. Fang.”

Fernsworth “Are you two getting along well?

A/F “Yes, Mister Fernsworth.”

Fernsworth “Great to hear.”

Fernsworth “You know, I’m real proud of you two.”

Fernsworth “I remember at the start of the year you were at each other's' throats.”

Fernsworth “And now look at you!”

“The two of us cringe.”

A “Uhh… Yeah, thanks.”

Fernsworth “At any rate, you two understand the material, right?”

A “Oh yeah, Fang and I are fine.”

A “I was just helping them with a few problems.”

“Phew, remembered it this time.”

Fernsworth “Good, good.”

Fernsworth “I won’t keep you any longer then.”

“Fernsworth meanders to pester the next few students.”

A “Anyways, where were we?”

“Turning back to Fang, her hands are trying to cover her face.”

“Except the blush manages to creep along her entire beak.”

A “Fang? You okay?”

“An embarrassed smile forms as she begins to shake her head.”

F “You never noticed, did you?”

“This sounds like a trap.”

A “Er… notice what?”

“Fang slips one of her hands off her head and holds it up for me to see.”

“She isn’t wearing the non-binary bracelet she’s had since the day I met her.”

F “I’ve been thinking and…”

F “And… I wouldn’t mind...”

F “Wouldn’t mind if you called me Lucy.”

F “I… I’d like it, in fact.”

A “I… A-are you sure?”

F “Mhm.”

“There’s a fragility to her voice. A stiffness in her nod.”

“But if Fa-”

“If Lucy would like it then…”

A “Alright then... Lucy.”

“She blushes again and looks away.”

“I test her name a couple times. It’s a nice name. Really sweet. But...”

“Fang fits her more in my mind.”

F “Only you, though.”

F “I don’t know if I’m comfortable with anyone else saying it yet.”

A “I-I see.”

A “Thank you for sharing that with me.”

“Now both of us are blushing.”

“...Well, if we’re already in the moment, I may as well ask.”

A “A-anyways, Flucy.”

F “Don’t stress yourself over it.”

A “Right, right.”

A “Anyways, uhh.”

A “Prom, right?”

“Fang’s amber eyes zero in on mine.”

“Her pleading gaze bores through to my soul and I feel the unstoppable urge to comfort her in any way possible.”

A “... You uhh, wanna go with me?”

F “EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEYYYYESS!!”

“Fang vibrates in her seat in excitement.”

--“Bah gawd, if Dr. Fernsworth hooked her up to a jet we could fly all the way to Brazil and back in minutes.”

F “OhmygodthisisgonnabesoawesomelikeholyfuckIactuallyhaveadateand-”

Fernsworth “Settle down now settle down.”

“I think she just realized that everyone was staring at her, because Fa- Lucy’s wings became a feathery barrier she hid within.”

A “Pfffftttahahahaha.”

F “Up the shut fuck.”

“Fang peaks out of her wing teepee, a glare with no heat trying to cow me.”

F “You’re my date. I’m allowed to be happy.”

“While her voice was petulant there was an underlying tone of cheer in it.”

“I reassured Lucy with a smile, which she responded by lowering her wings until they folded neatly behind her.”

A “Yeah. Though I should warn you that I can’t dance for shit. Your feet have been warned.”

F “That’s fine.”

F “I’ll just step on your feet instead.”

“Crap, I need a suit.”

F “You’re mumbling again. And uhmm.”

F “I could ask Naser for his old one.”

A “I was thinking something like that, but I’ll probably just ask my dad for his old tux.”

A “His is tailored for humans, after all.”

A “Be pretty silly to be walking around all night with the wingholes exposing my undershirt.”

F “That’d be pretty silly, yeah.”

F “And then there’s the tail.”

A “Oh god no.”

A “But yeah, my dad’s suit would work nice, even if it’s a bit old.”

A “He used to tell me about the parties he went to when he was about my age.”

F “Sounds like he was a lot of fun.”

A “Anyways, you got anything to wear?”

F “My mom’s already probably bought the “perfect outfit” for me.”

A “But the announcement for prom was just earlier this period.”

F “And?”

A “Sounds like it’s a date, then.”

“Fang’s smile is cherubic.”

“And before I can fully memorize it,”

“*DING-DONG, BING-BONG*”

A “Crap, the assignment.”

F “We were mostly done with it anyways.”

“I look at our mostly done sheet.”

“Flipping it over, the backside has twice the questions and four times the blank spots.”

F “M-mostly half way?”

“I simply sigh and drop the sheet.”

A “Finish it at my place?”

F “Sounds like a second date.”

“...”
8.5d (anon gets fang's pronouns right and fang teases him for it, almost making fun of him for continuing to do so. fang is now carrying herself with more confidence.) While working, the teacher approaches Anon and Fang and asks if they're doing well on the project, and if he's getting along well with Fang. He responds with 'Fang's doing well, I'm getting along with them.', Fang makes fun of Anon for still using her old pronouns, and Anon laughs with her about it a bit. Fang asks Anon to Prom, and Anon, who was about to ask her the same thing, accepts. Spears asks Fang if she could play her guitar at Prom. NOTE Also have Fang reveal her real name to Anon here.

“About fifteen minutes into the assignment, the two of us are just about done.”

“We’re making surprisingly good time.”

F “Uhm… and you said that the electrons hold the negative charge, right?”

A “Yeah, yeah.”

F “Can’t imagine when I’d be using this crap in real life.”

A “You never know, you might shrink one day.”

F “Yeah, and you might stop pretending you’re livestreaming on Yousnoot.”

A “As far as you know I might be giving you incorrect answers, you know.”

F “Mhm, sure.”

“The teacher is making his rounds checking on the students and gets to our desks.”

Fernsworth “Hello, Anon. Fang.”

Fernsworth “Are you two getting along well?

A/F “Yes, Mister Fernsworth.”

Fernsworth “Great to hear.”

Fernsworth “You know, I’m real proud of you two.”

Fernsworth “I remember at the start of the year you were at each other's' throats.”

Fernsworth “And now look at you!”

“The two of us cringe.”

A “Uhh… Yeah, thanks.”

Fernsworth “At any rate, you two understand the material, right?”

A “Oh yeah, Fang and I are fine.”

A “I was just helping them with a few problems.”

“Phew, remembered it this time.”

Fernsworth “Good, good.”

Fernsworth “I won’t keep you any longer then.”

“Fernsworth meanders to pester the next few students.”

A “Anyways, where were we?”

“I turn back to Fang and her mischievous grin.”

A “What?”

“Her grin only grows.”

A “What?! What’s with the look?”

“She shakes her head and holds up her wrist.”

A “Uh… it’s ten thirty-seven? Why is that funny?”

F “Anon you ignorant slut.”

F “Notice something missing?”

A “...Why do you have feathers on your elbows anyway?”

F “Gawd! No! I’m not enbie, Anon.”

A “Oh… Still, why do you have feathers on your elbows?”

“Fang rolls her eyes and digs her feathered elbow into my side.”

A “Alright alright, I get it.”

A “Just joking around.”

F “Shame your jokes suck.”

“We chuckle together.”

A “So, like, I can say you’re my girlfriend now?”

“Fang blushes a little.”

F “You always could. Dummy.”

--”Sugoi! Tsundere Fang kawaii desu.”

“The blush becomes contagious and I find myself looking back at the worksheet.”

-- “G-G-G-GIRLFRIEND?!”

“... Girlfriend…”

-- “Giggity”

“Suddenly I’m feeling squeamish all over again.”

“I mean, we went on dates before, but she’s never straight up said she’s my girlfriend…”

“Now I’m on the spot.”

“It only makes sense that I ask her to prom, right?”

“Why am I getting so worked up again all of a sudden?”

“This is ridiculous, I’m just going to ask.”

-- “I pull my plastic katana from my obi as I position myself in seiza, laying the blade beside me on my right.”

-- “Bowing forward until my head touches the ground, I prepare to take the leap of faith.”

A “Hey, Fang, you-”

-- F “Get in, loser. We have a city to burn.”

F “We’re going to prom together, right?”

A “O-oh, yeah. Totally.”

A “I was gonna ask if you wanted to go at all.”

F “Of course I do, but do you want to go?”

A “I mean, only with you?”

F “Yes or no, dork.”

A “Yes.”

F “That wasn’t so hard, was it?”

A “Like plucking feathers.”

“She playfully elbows me again.”

“I think I get the feathers on the elbow thing now, because those things fucking dig in. Ow.”

F “Do you even have something to wear?”

A “I was going to ask my dad for his old clothes.”

F “You sure? I could ask Naser for his old stuff.”

A “Tail and wings.”

F “Right, right.”

A “What about you?”

A “You actually gonna wear a dress?

F “I’ve got this sick looking dress shirt…”

F “Naaaah, shirts suck.”

A “Wings again?”

F “Wings again. At least I can wear a backless dress.”

“I cup my chin and try to picture the dress.”

-- “How would you even put that on with those wings?”

“The heat -- confusion creeping up my face tells Fang exactly what I’m thinking.”

“I grin and nod approvingly.”

“And earn a third elbow to my side.”

A “Wait, hold on.”

A “Do you still go by Fang, at least?”

F “Why wouldn’t I?”

A “Cool, just checking.”

F “Taking it one step at a time, you know?”

F “There’s only about ten minutes left of class, are we gonna have enough time to finish the assignment?”

A “Shit, yeah. Forgot.”

“I flip over the page to reveal the entire second half of the assignment.”

A “It’s gonna be close though.”

“Fang scoots her chair closer to me.”

F “No time to waste then, yeah?”

“Splitting the questions between us, Fang and I are able to finish the assignment seconds before the bell.”

“Somehow.”

“We walk through the hall together, at least until we have to split to our separate classes.”

A “Hey wait, you did the word search bit this time, right?”

A “I thought you said you were terrible at those?”

F “And you’ve believed me up to this point.”

A “I feel used.”

F “That’s because I used you.”

A “I’ll get you fo-”

Sp “Ah, Fang! There you are, a moment please.”

“We turn to see Principal Spears trailing behind us.”

F “Yes?”

Sp “Fang, I was planning on asking you during your next class, but since I found you here…”

Sp “I’m embarrassed to say we’re missing one event slot during prom. Scheduling error.”

Sp “And your teacher, Mr Jingo, recommended you for your musical talents.”

-- Sp “He said your exotic fan dance can distract even dinosaurs.”

Sp “I’m not asking you to make your decision right now, but if you’d consider helping out by performing a musical number or two that would help monumentally.”

F “Oh!”

A “Fang’s going to play for the school?”

Sp “If Fang agrees to.”

F “Well, uh… Sure!”

F “Yeah, I’d love to do some songs for prom.”

Sp “Fantastic news, Fang. When you can, please swing by the office.”

Sp “And I’ll say as your principal I’m very proud of you.”

Sp “You’ve had a... rocky year to say the least, but here you are a better person for it.”

F “Thank you, Principal Spears. I’ll come after school today.”

“Spears nods and heads off.”

F “Shit, now I really need to get a good dress.”

A “I thought you had one?”

F “A party dress isn’t a performance dress!”

F “It’s like- you know what I mean.”

A “I guess?”

A “You don’t seem as excited as last time you got somewhere to play.”

F “I know, I mean... last time I had a whole band to play with.”

A “You sure you’ll be alright playing solo?”

-- F “Actually, Anon...”

-- “She hands me a triangle and a small metal stick to bang on it with.”

-- F “Practice this. You’re in the band now. You have no choice.”

F “Probably.”

F “I’ll also need to practice a lot more…”

F “You’ll help me, right?”

A “Of course.”

A “As long as you don’t need me up on stage with you.”

F “I’m trying to keep the crowd from throwing things this time around, actually.”

A “Bite me.”

F “Speaking of. I’ll see you at lunch, right?”

A “Yeah, of course.”

“Fang pecks me on the cheek and starts down the hall to her next class.”

“I feel my lips spread into a grin. It’s kind of weird to think of it, but I’m actually excited for prom.”

“Man, I hope dad’s --pink lycra jumpsuit suit has actually been to the cleaner, I don’t wanna disappoint.”

“...”
8.75 Anon and Fang fluff
8.75a (music museum date)

--“Dating has changed.”

--“It's no longer about romance, common interests, or emotional connection. It's an endless series of proxy dates, using apps and websites.”

--“Dating--and it's consumption of time--has become a well-oiled machine.”

--“Dating has changed.”

--“Women use filters, and photoshop, and bullshit their profile pic. Make-up on their face to hide how hideous they are.”

--“Genetic control, information control, emotion control, restaurant control… everything is monitored and kept under control.”

--“Dating…has changed.”

--“The age of romance has become the age of hook-ups, all in the name of averting catastrophe from poorly planned pregnancies, and she who controls the app, controls history.”

--“Dating…has changed.”

--“When hook-ups are under (her) control, sex becomes routine”

“Later that night after school Fang texts me.”

“Fang: Alright i got a plan”

“Anon: a plan?”

“Fang: To make sure the concert goes off without a hitch”

“Fang: First we need to learn right from the source”

“Anon: the source?”

“Fang: Theres an old museum of fine arts doing a special exhibit on music next week”

“Fang: Lots of stories of bands pulling through last minute right?”

“Fang: If we study from those old guys we’re guaranteed to do great!”

“Anon: is it really that simple?”

“Fang: Sure!”

“Fang: Were gonna learn how old bands did well, were gonna play our music at prom, everyones gonna love us, and its gonna be great.”

“Anon: that’s a lot of ‘gonnas’”

“Fang: And youre gonna come with me”

“Anon: what about trish and reed?”

“Fang: Sending them to a bunch of old record shops to cover more ground”

“Fang: So itll just be the two of us”

“Anon: sounds like a plan.”

“Fang: Meet me at the galleria at three alright?”

“Anon: i’ll be there.”

“I put my phone down and look around my room.”

“Do you need to dress special to go to museums…?”

“Even if you did, best I can do right now is this dirty dress shirt and slacks with weird stains. -- this pink lycra jumpsuit.”

“... Not sure if that would be good enough.”

“It’s probably fine, I shouldn’t be getting so worked up.”

“I get to spend the whole day with Fang, after all.”

“...”

“The fine art museum turns out to be a relatively modern building right in the middle of the galleria.”

“Exactly the last kind of place I would expect Fang to be seen at.”

“I almost regret my decision not to wear my dirty dress clothes before seeing Fang already waiting for me by the entrance.”

“Seeing me approach, she drops her cigarette and grinds the butt to ash under her heel.”

F “Took you long enough.”

-- “I stop three feet in front of her and combat roll.”

-- “Plon, plon, plon.”

“Here’s your one chance Anon don’t fuck it up.”

A “Kept you waiting, huh?”

F “God, you’re such a dork. C’mon, the music exhibit is inside.”

“Thankfully admission to the museum was free.”

“She leads me by the hand through the front doors, and I immediately feel the temperature fall at least ten degrees.”

“Are museums always this cold?”

“The music exhibit is all the way in the back of the museum, past several rooms of abstract modern art.”

-- “There is an epic picture of a dinosaur kicking a fan though, wonder who that is.”

F “What a bunch of junk.”

A “What, you don’t want to buy a painting made with dino egg yolks and whites for ten million?”

F “What a steal!”

A “What about a sheet of paper with an url to a picture of a fridge for fifty grand?”

F “You’re messing with me.”

A “It’s true, I’ll show you when we get out of here.”

“We reach the exhibit hall with the big words ‘THE STYGY MOLDRIX EXPERIENCE’ hanging over the door.”

“Despite it being a limited time event on the life and times of a famous musician, there’s only a few dozen people here.”

F “Finally!”

F “Alright, Anon, get ready to take notes!”

A “Notes…?”

“Fang grabs me by the forearm and rushes the two of us into the exhibit.”

“Once inside, she gives me her phone.”

F “Take pictures of everything for me, okay?”

A “Dowhatnow? Uh, okay, sure…”

F “Let’s start with… Uhh…”

“She scans the room briefly before pointing giddily to a guitar hanging inside a

case.”

“Despite being several decades old, the guitar was clearly well looked after.”

“The lacquer on the wood gleamed under the spotlights and the metal didn’t have a speck of rust on it.”

F “OH! OH! That!”

A “What is it?”

“She sprints over to the case and I have to catch up making sure I don’t drop her phone.”

F “It’s Stygy’s famous guitar!”

F “It’s actually a right handed piece, but Stygy was left-handed but couldn’t afford a lefty guitar, so he re-strung a regular one so he could play it.”

F “This guitar was the one he used on his last show at an informal gig in some jazz club in London, a few days before he bit it while OD-ing on drugs.”

A “Yeah, that’s pretty cool.”

“I caught maybe half of that.”

“Either way, I snap several pictures from various angles while Fang continues her sermon.”

-- F “Here’s his famous pot, where he cooked all his LSD!”

-- F “Ooh, ooh, a jar of his bile from when he choked to death in his sleep!”

F “Alright, what’s next?”

“She drags me along to the next display case, a few vacuum-sealed pages with various scribblings on them.”

F “And these are some letters he hand-wrote to his father! If my dad wasn’t such an asshole he could have pulled some strings and let us play in the precinct!”

“I try keeping up with her ramblings while taking pictures, but somewhere along the

way I lose her in the twisting corridors.”

A “Oops.”

“I stand in place looking around a bit, but she’s nowhere in sight.”

“She can’t have gone far, guess I’ll keep taking pictures of things.”

“My eyes are drawn to a monitor on the wall playing documentary footage.”

“It was a clip of Stygy playing the national anthem as a protest song or something.”

“It sounded kinda cool, I’ll give him that much.”

F “Ooh, that’s a good find, Anon!”

“Fang’s voice makes me jump as she reappears out of nowhere.”

F “Maybe we could play something like that, show us as a champion of the common man!”

A “...Yeah, my thoughts exactly. Glad I could help.”

F “I saw some good stuff in the next row over we can go check out. too.”

“She drags me away from the screen to whatever it is she wants to take ‘inspiration’ from.”

“I’m glad she’s having fun and all, but…”

“I wish this was more of a date than a research assignment.”

“But I guess she’d feel the same way if I bombarded her with anime.”

“She has her interests and I have mine.”

“Maybe after this I can take her to a restaurant.”

“We’re in a city, but there’s bound to be something relatively cheap nearby.”

“It’d be nice, talking about the pictures and things we’ve been taking over some burgers.”

“It’s only four-thirty now, it’ll be about dinner time by the time we get out, too.”

“Pretty decent timing, sounds like a good plan.”

“Fang drags me around a few more exhibits, cataloguing the various paraphernalia and stopping occasionally to obsess over some minor detail.”

“Eventually we loop back around to the entrance.”

“Fang looks back at the room we just came from.”

A “You about ready to go?”

F “Maybe… Just trying to think if we missed anything…”

A “I’m pretty sure we got everything, you could probably reconstruct the entire exhibit using only these pictures I took.”

F “I guess… Just can’t have this part of the plan go wrong, you know?”

A “About that, I’m still not sure what your plan is meant to-”

F “OH WAIT!”

“She dashes off back into the room we just came in, leaving my words dangling from my mouth.”

“While I’m gone her phone buzzes.”

“Trish: hey r u rdy to mt up lik u sad we wud?”

“What…?”

“It says these ebonics come from Trish, but I didn’t know they were meeting later…”

“This’ll throw a huge wrench into my plan earlier…”

F “Alright, sorry, I’m back.”

A “What was that about?”

F “Sorry, had to hit up the gift shop.”

A “Oh.”

“That explains the fuck-ugly tie-dye monstrosity tide around her headcrest.”

A “You uh, got a text from Trish, I think.”

“I hand her back her phone.”

F “Oh! That’s right, I told her and Reed that we’d meet up after we were done with everything.”

A “...I see…”

F “Right, so I’ll tell her we should meet at-”

A “Actually, Fang, hold on a second…”

F “Hm?”

A “Before we all meet together, do you want to stop by a restaurant or something, just the two of us?”

“She thinks to herself for a moment and smiles.”

F “Of course, I dragged you along this whole time after all.”

A “Don’t worry about it.”

A “I think I can get us something from that taco truck I saw on the way in.”

F “Alright, I’ll tell Trish to wait a bit.”

“Instead of Fang dragging me through the museum, we walked out casually hand in hand.”

“I think I saw that truck a block east from here…”

A “By the way, do you take pollo or asada or what on your taco. Please don’t say leng-”

F “Wait!!”

“She stops dead in her tracks, head jerked to the side.”

A “Huh?”

F “Look!”

“I peer at where she’s pointing.”

“Some poster on the museum wall, it’s an advertisement for a documentary playing in the museum’s mini theater.”

“And… It’s a documentary on Stygy Moldrix.”

F “I didn’t see this on the way in, we have to see that too!”

A “But what abou-”

F “I know, I know, I’m sorry Anon…”

“Her eyes plead with me for mercy.”

F “Just bear with me a while longer?”

“I…”

“Well, it’s not like the truck’s going anywhere, at least.”

A “... Fine. Let’s go…”

F “Oh, thank you Anon!”

A “Yeah, I know this means a lot to you.”

F “Come on, the next showing is in five minutes!”

“Already I’m being dragged back inside.”

“I guess seeing a movie with Fang isn’t the worst thing in the world.”

“...”

“Well this sucks.”

“I feel my stomach grumble for what feels like the fiftieth time, once again regretting not even buying an overpriced bag of popcorn.”

“Stealthily as I could, I check the time on my phone before the light can distract anyone else.”

“It’s been thirty-six minutes since the documentary started, only a few more to go before I can escape.”

“I glance over at Fang, who has been so engrossed in the film that she hasn’t so much as looked at me this entire time.”

“Resigning myself to my fate, my eyes return to the screen which is currently going on about Stygy’s fourth unfinished studio album.”

“How exciting.”

“I would have just slept through it if I knew Fang wouldn’t be upset with me.”

“Not just because of how interested she is in Stygy Moldrix, but because I wouldn’t be taking notes.”

“As the screen fades and the lights turn back on, I silently thank Raptor Jesus for ending my forty-minute torment.”

F “That was really good! A lot of ideas for the band!”

A “Er… yeah, it was cool I guess.”

“Just please get me out of here.”

A “Now about that food truck…”

F “Oh! I told Trish and Reed that we could meet at the Galleria food court, we can get something to eat there.”

--”*Internal screaming*”

“Really not looking forward to being anywhere near Trish but food is food I guess.”

“Part of me just wants to call the date here and go home.”

“Not that it was ever much of a date to begin with.”

A “Alright, let’s go then.”

“At least I can talk to Reed about Rock Ring or something.”

“Fang smiles and leads me back out of the museum and towards the food court.”

“I still think this is a bad idea, I’m still not over what Trish did and I doubt her mind has changed much either.”

F “Stop being grumpy, Anon, you’re just hungry.”

“For fuck’s sake the mumbling.”

A “Fang, someone filled my locker with a shit-ton of hentai they printed out last week. It’s not okay.”

F “That’s just some dumbass at school, we can get some food and it’ll be fine.”

“We round the corner and I immediately lock on to a certain triceratops.”

“Trish and Reed were already eating at one of the tables.”

“Fuck that.”

A “I’m gonna go get something to eat first… You want anything?”

F “Nah, I’m good. Not that hungry.”

“Extra order of fries it is.”

“I split off from Fang to find a place to get food from.”

“I glance over my shoulder to see Fang saying something and hugging Trish, both of them turning to look over at me.”

“Trish looking significantly less enthused than Fang. No surprise there.”

“I stand in line for a Cretaceous Fried Chicken stand and order my food, savoring every moment I wait and don’t have to interact with Trish.”

“The moment doesn’t last long and I walk over to the table, food in hand.”

“I take the seat between Fang and Reed, which puts me straight across the table from Trish.”

“Of fucking course.”

“I place the basket of fries in front of Fang and she immediately starts digging in. Made the right call there.”

-- “You know what they say. Dino bitches love fries.”

“Reed gives me a thumbs up, wearing a pair of giant oversized sunglasses.”

“While Trish is making a face somewhere in between judgemental and open contempt.”

T “So what took you so long? He wasn’t wasting your time again, was he, Fang?”

“Welp time to clock out of that conversation.”

“I’m sure they can have a riveting discussion without me.”

“It’s just one meal after all, I can ignore Trish for an hour and then Fang and I can leave.”

“Digging into my basket of chicken tenders, I pull out my phone and head straight to the armenian graphic design forum.”

“There’s another Grugsnax thread I can shitpost in to pass the time.”

“Every once in a while I look up from my phone and catch Trish giving me a death glare before turning to look back at the others.”

“Before long my train of thought is broken by Fang saying… something.”

F “...so Anon, what do you think?”

A “Uh, yeah. That sounds good?”

F “Great! We can try Trish’s new song in the next rehearsal!”

“Trish looks smug at that. What did I agree to?”

T “I’m surprised you agreed to that, I would have thought you wanted us to play some anime song instead.”

“She’s just loving this, isn’t she.”

Re “Hey man, that sounds kinda fun.”

“Reed is qualed by Trish’s sneer.”

“Know what. I don’t care anymore.”

F “Maybe… But let’s talk about that later. I’m cravin’ a milkshake right now.”

“Fang gets up and turns to a nearby smoothie booth.”

“Leaving me here.”

“To deal with this. These.”

T “So, Anon…”

“Her grin is just short of vicious.”

T “So happy you agreed to my idea.”

T “Guess you’re starting to get some good taste.”

T “Better than any of that weeb-pop trash you’ve got on your phone.”

“I pointedly ignore her. She’s trying to get a rise out of me.”

T “Maybe I’ll make a somebody out of you too.”

T “Maybe…”

“My fist clenches tightly beneath the table.”

“I can see it now.”

“Her stupid horn jammed right in her eye.”

“I sigh.”

“My fist unfurls.”

A “Yeah, sure, whatever.”

“God this was a waste of a day.”

“Normally I would love just spending time with Fang, but she’s been so preoccupied with the band lately.”

“I don’t even know why she needed me today when all she did was drag me around.”

“And now being anywhere near Trish is the cherry on the shit sundae.”

“Fang returns a few moments later with a milkshake in her hand.”

F “What’d I miss?”

T “Just talking to White Knight about his taste in music.”

“Fuck this.”

“I can’t deal with this anymore.”

“Looking to my phone, I make up a convenient excuse to get the hell out of there.”

A “Shit, I just got a text from the post office. Says my dad’s prom suit came and I

wanted to get there before it closed.”

A “Sorry to do this Fang, I gotta go. See you at school tomorrow.”

“I hate lying to Fang this way but I just can’t stand being around Trish any more.”

F “O-oh, it wasn’t anything I did, was it?”

A “Everything’s fine, I just want to be ready for prom and your show.”

“That seemed to put her at ease.”

F “Alright… we still have a bunch to talk about for the show. See you tomorrow, then.”

Re “Peace, dude.”

“I give Fang a reassuring hug and promptly head towards the bus stop, not missing Trish’s dumb smug face as I pass her.”

“God damn it.”

“...”
8.75b (band fang likes concert)

“The saturday after next I’m laying in bed, scrolling through various feeds of worthless information.”

“God this Sandanistan post-modern graffitist RSS feed’s become a dumpster fire. Fucking tourists.”

“I got an open can of soda, the lights are out, and I can hear RAYmba bumping around his box.”

“This is the life.”

“I’m about to reply to some guy claiming that he is most definitely angered in the posterior, but my phone buzzes, throwing off my answer.”

“It’s a text from Fang.”

“Fang: heyyyyyyy you got any plans later today?”

“Anon: who do you take me for”

“Anon: why do you ask?”

“Fang: ive shown you some songs from my favorite band right?”

“Fang: ‘Bigly Die’?”

“I vaguely recall Fang’s phone bugging out occasionally, was that supposed to be music?”

“Anon: think so yeah”

“Fang: theyre coming into town for tonight only!!!!!!!”

“Anon: cool, you plan on buying a ticket?”

“Fang: no need >:)))))”

“Fang: i won them in a raffle!”

“Anon: now when you say ‘them’...”

“Fang: of course i want you to go dork”

“Anon: oh. cool.”

“Anon: wait”

“Fang: ill come pick you up at six tonight, dont forget!”

“Anon: alright, see you then”

“My hand falls to my side, dropping the phone onto the mattress.”

“A concert…”

“On the one hand, I get to spend time with Fang doing something they love.”

“On the other, concert.”

“Who am I kidding, of course I’m going.”

“I should go run and buy some earplugs just in case…”

“...”

“As I wait in front of the building for Fang I can’t help but feel a bit nervous.”

“I’ve never been to a proper concert before.”

“The closest was Fang and the band at Moe’s place.”

“That counts, right?”

“Before I can continue that thought, I spot the NasCar speeding towards me.”

“I feel myself cringe a bit for even thinking of that name.”

“I move to the back before the car comes to a complete stop and open the door, Fang sitting on the other side.”

F “Get in, dweeb.”

“I can tell Naser is a bit nervous driving in this part of town with how he’s constantly looking around the car.”

“The door barely shuts when he speeds away from my apartment building and back towards civilization.”

Nas “So uh, Anon…”

A “Yeah?”

Nas “That’s where you live?”

“Essentially asking ‘are you that poor’.”

A “Nah, I just sleep there, keep all my stuff there, and hang out there most of the time.”

“That elicited a laugh from Fang and a confused look from Naser.”

“Can’t win them all I guess.”

A “So this band-”

F “Bigly Die.”

A “Bigly Die. Where are they playing at?”

F “Some club on the other side of town called the Lava Lamp.”

“Can’t say I’ve really been to a club either.”

A “...And what genre is their music exactly?”

F “They’re an Extreme Indie Experimental Hardcore-Mathcore-Grindcore Industrial Heavy Punk Metal band.”

“...What.”

F “With an emphasis on creative expression and a down-to-earth worldview that just really speaks to me.”

F “It’s the kind of stuff I wish we could have played in our band but Trish never thought it was ‘marketable’ enough.”

A “English?”

Nas “Blender noises.”

A “Thanks.”

F “Oh, fuck both of you.”

“Fang pouts, or as they put it, was in ‘silent protest against the world.’”

“Really, the way Fang crossed their arms and pointedly looked away from the two of us made me chuckle at the cute angry act.”

A “So, word salad --leftist meme genre aside, they sound pretty big.”

Nas “Not really.”

F “They’re pretty underground, honestly.”

“Fang passes my ticket over so I can see.”

“Oh wow.”

“The venue can hold double what Moe’s could.”

“...Does that make it a big venue? Trish said Moe’s was small.”

F “The place shouldn’t be too packed.”

F “I know you don’t exactly like crowds, Anon.”

“Awww, she does care.”

“When we get there Naser stops me before I get out.”

Nas “You need earplugs bro?”

A “Oh, I brought my own actually, but thanks.”

F “Bunch of pansies. Both of you.”

“Naser smiles again and drives off, leaving Fang and I in front of the building.”

“The place is a warehouse --garden shed three --feet stories tall, with graffiti staining nearly every inch of it.”

“I’ve always wondered how people get up there.”

“Already I can hear the bass rattling my eardrums.”

“A man by the entrance checks our tickets and lets us pass.”

A “This place must be pretty nice if they have to use a bouncer.”

F “Oh yeah, the band makes plenty. They can afford some neat stuff like that.”

“Painted signs in the lobby point to a stairwell leading down into the basement.”

“The temperature rises a good twenty degrees on the trip down.”

A “Jeez, do they have a furnace going down here?”

F “Concerts are usually hot, Anon.”

F “Didn’t I tell you to bring a water bottle or something?”

A “No?” --I mean I did but mine’s filled with vodka?

F “Oops.”

F “Well, there was a water fountain back up in the lobby. Not sure if you want to actually drink from it though unless you have a lead stomach lining.”

A “I’ll keep that in mind.”

“The music’s getting pretty loud --starting to sound like a gaggle of pissed-off cats being dropped into lawnmower blades, so I pop in the earplugs I got earlier.”

“I was starting to hear animalistic chanting combined with the arrhythmic bashing of drums and what could only be described as the unholy fusion of squealing feedback and an unmaintained generator running on overdrive.”

“Fang rolls their eyes and gestures to the open door to the concert hall.”

F “The preshow’s almost done, we got here just in time.”

“As soon as we open the doors, we’re almost blown back by the wall of sound that blasts past us.”

“The earplugs were not helping. At all.”

“I’m pretty sure I just went deaf.”

“There are about a hundred to a hundred fifty of the concert-goers, give or take.”

“Most of them are thronging the stage while a few hang back and nurse their beers, waiting for the show to start.”

??? “THANK YOU MOTHERFUCKERS FOR BEING HERE TONIGHT!”

“The crowd responds with a collective roar of approval, Fang adding her voice to the cacophonic chorus.”

??? “It was an honor to open for the main show tonight, and they’re in for the gig of their lives judging by how brutal you guys were in the pit!”

“Another roar rips from the audience at the bare-faced flattery, probably the leftover adrenaline in their systems.”

??? “Alright… It’s time. Are you guys ready?”

“The crowd is practically foaming at the mouth as they scream unintelligibly yet again.”

??? “Come on, is that all you fucking got?! ARE YOU FUCKING READY?!”

“I thought that they couldn’t possibly have been more ready, but they somehow manage to scream even louder.”

“I think I even saw some guy get punched as the person next to him thrust his fist upward while he yelled.”

??? “Now that’s what I like to hear. Let’s welcome… BIGLY DIE!”

“The crowd goes absolutely nuclear, people jumping up and down screaming their heads off as the band walks up onto the stage.”

-- “Looking next to me, Fang seems to have turned into a cartoonish scribble as she completely loses her shit.”

“Without another word they launch right into their opening song.”

“A flurry of instruments meet my ears in something vaguely resembling music.”

“I still don’t quite understand the appeal, but the energy of the moment is getting to me.”

“Before I know it I’m jumping and fist swinging along with everyone else.”

“Fang sees me join in and their beaming smile intensifies.”

“Soon enough I’m elbow deep in the pit screaming as wildly as the crowd.”

“...Then a stray elbow clocks --boops me out early.”

“...”

“Urgh…”

“Guh… Fuck piss cunt shit…”

??? “How the fuck are you so heavy?”

“Wha…?”

“Someone’s dragging me?”

F “Oh, you’re back!”

“Fang lets me down onto my back, and I sit up straight.”

“We’re back in the lobby of the building, only it’s a lot quieter than when we first arrived.”

“A dull pain rings through my head.”

F “Are you alright?”

A “What happened?”

F “No idea, after the show I just found you laying on the ground.”

F “You’re pretty lucky no one jumped on you. Everyone’s got good ole steel toes.”

A “I was out the rest of the show?”

F “That’s the concert experience, right?”

F “Isn’t it great?”

A “It… certainly is a different experience, yeah.”

A “Argh, my head…”

F “Yeah, you’re gonna want a rag or something.”

F “Your lip’s pretty busted.”

“I feel around my face, and sure enough a new pulse of pain shakes me.”

“My fingers are covered in blood.” -- as I register my new cleft lip.

A “Do you got one?”

F “No… Sorry…”

“I bunch up the front of my shirt and hold it to my mouth.”

F “Naser always keeps a first-aid kit in his trunk, he’ll be here in ten or so minutes.”

F “You’ll look like ass at school for a few days but it can’t be that much of a change.”

“Fang laughs at their own joke and I try to join in before my splitting headache kicks in.”

F “Can you get up or do I have to drag you all the way out the door?”

“My legs are a bit wobbly but I manage to stand up with some assistance from Fang.”

“They lead me out the front of the building and we sit on the curb to wait for Naser.”

F “You doing okay? The bleeding stopped.”

A “I feel like my head’s about to explode but I’ll be fine.”

A “Better than last time this happened at least.”

-- F “At least this time you got beat up by an animate object, amiright? :^)”

“Fang reaches into their pocket and retrieves their lighter and pack of cigarettes.”

F “...You want a smoke?”

A “You know me too well.”

“I take them from Fang’s hand and light my own cigarette for once.”

“Taking my first draw and it’s almost enough to ignore my migraine.”

F “You seem to really like those.”

A “Yeah…”

F “You should get around to scraping enough pennies to get your own sometime.”

A “Yeah, I’ll start buying my own when they cost less than my monthly rent.”

F “So until then you’re gonna keep getting your teeth kicked in just to get one of mine?”

A “That’s the plan!”

“We chuckle, and Fang shifts closer to me, hugging my arm.”

F “Dweeb.”

“...”

8.75c (dinner/movie date)

“A few weeks later and I’m waiting at my place for Fang to arrive.”

“Lucy, I mean.”

“She said she found something neat to watch and was pretty excited about it too.”

“We plan on watching what she found and maybe ordering some takeout, and somehow she got her father to let her visit.”

“I run through the various methods she managed that, and all that comes to mind is some kind of drug deal involving Reed and a mountain of coke.”

“Glancing at my alarm clock, it’s about five minutes before she gets here.”

“Time for one last check to make sure everything’s ready.”

“The bed’s made, my shelves are freshly organized, RAYmba’s in sleep mode so he doesn’t bug us during the film.”

“I can’t help but feel I’m forgetting something.”

“Snacks maybe…?”

“I peek inside my fridge to check and immediately slam it shut.”

“Then I put duct tape over the handle.”

“There’s a good sign I've been having too much takeout recently.”

“Somehow I don’t think tupperware containers should be pushed open by mold from the inside.”

“I remember putting a bag of chips in here a while back, I have to go back in there.”

“Donning a handkerchief as a mask and a spray bottle of air freshener, my hand hovers over the duct tape.”

“If I can just continually spray while I grab the bag, the smell shouldn’t get too far…”

“Okay, okay, I can do this.”

“For Lucy.”

“Three…”

“Two…”

“Oonnnnneee…”

“*BZZZZZZTT*”

“Oh.”

“I toss the spray can under my cot and rush to open the door.”

F “Hey, Anon!”

F “...What’s with the mask?”

-- A “Uhhhh… covid?”

-- “That joke is gonna get so old.”

A “...Cosplay.”

F “What’s that?”

“The cloth is quickly discarded onto the countertop.”

A “Nevermind.”

A “Come on in.”

“Lucy enters and tosses her bag on the floor.”

A “What movie did you want to show me?”

F “Oh! Well, I was walking around the neighborhood when I saw that Stella chick having a garage sale of some sort.”

“Uh oh.”

F “And she had this on for sale for only two dollars!”

“She yanks a small CD case from her bag and hands it to me.”

A “Escawhat-now?”

F “Yeah! I remembered you were really into this sort of thing, so I thought it would be a nice gesture!”

A “Wow, that’s real nice of you.”

A “Let’s go ahead and pop it in.”

“My Pachystation 4 eats the disc and starts humming.”

“I turn the lights down, make sure the volume is at a good level, and take my seat next to Lucy on my bed.”

F “It’s getting pretty chilly, isn’t it?”

A “It’s only like five, yo-”

“Holy shit I’m stupid.”

A “Actually, it is a bit cold.”

“I pull out the blanket from under me and drape it over us.”

“Lucy leans into my shoulder.”

“Her hair brushes lightly against the side of my head.”

“This setup is the stuff dreams are made of…”

“Hope the movie is good.”

“...”

“Ninety minutes later, the credits emerge from the bottom of the screen.”

“The movie, it uh…”

“Let me find the words…”

“That was quite possibly the worst shit I’ve ever seen!”

“This went in and out of my mind just like that, it felt like I had just taken a nap on a highway, and a car ran me over once every three seconds and I just woke up.”

“It feels like I drank 50 liters of pure ethanol and am experiencing the godmother of all hangovers.”

“I can’t remember shit from any of this, just the character design from the deepest darks of the deep-darks, and characters that have the same charm as someone shitting on sandpaper and rubbing it on your brand new sports car.”

“The only thing I can vaguely remember is that a school girl got horny over wings and blood mechas, nothing else.”

“What were they thinking?!”

“I am tempted to watch it again, write an entire novel about how bad it is, and then blow my fucking brains out.”

“This was the worst shit I’ve ever seen.”

F “...”

A “...”

“I bite my tongue and wait to see if Lucy felt in any way similar about that disgrace of anime.”

F “I liked it.”

-- “I scream in terror.”

A “It was alright, a little full of itself but good music and imagination.”

--“I now understand why Stella’s jaw was introduced to Moe’s floor.”

--“If I ever see her again I think I’m gonna ram this disk down her throat and make her choke on it.”

A “The art design was certainly unique.”

“Left unsaid was the nightmare-inducing character designs.”

“Good lord what the fuck was wrong with their faces. And their eyes.”

“I repress the involuntary shudder.”

F “I can see why you like this stuff.”

A “Er… Yeah…”

-- “Suddenly, Spears kicks down my door with a look of unyielding primal rage.”

-- Sp “I SMELL SHIT TASTE IN ANIME!”

-- “He lets out a REEEEE that shakes the ground.”

-- “His anger is finally fully released after smashing up my television set for a

full, unceasing hour and jumping from my window, but not before handing me a full box set containing every season of Lucky Star.”

-- “What a fucking chad.”

A “So how bout you order some food and I’ll put something else on?”

F “Sure. Something oriental, to go with the marathon?”

“I nod, hiding the fact that I’m trying to break the disk of god awful anime behind my back.”

“This was worse than reddit’s recommended anime list.”

“God, Lucy’s first exposure to anime and it was that trash fire.”

“Okay, I can fix this.”

“Gotta go with the classic.”

“Cowboy Bebop.”

-- “I can hear Spears scream out in the distance.”

-- Sp “Good fucking choice for once, anon!”

F “Huh?”

“Lucy’s looking over her phone.”

F “Anon, the delivery guy just said they don’t deliver to this neighborhood.”

A “Fair.”

F “What? You can’t be serious.”

F “This place isn’t that bad.”

A “Lucy, I’m fairly certain I saw a baby on the corner last night.”

F “O-oh…”

A “There’s a video store a few blocks away.”

A “I mean, they’re probably auctioning organs in the back or something, but they still got snacks and stuff.”

F “A what store?

A “A video store? Y’know, like Blockbusters?”

F “Those still exist?”

--A “Where else am I gonna get my imported hentai? The internet?

A “As a front, sure.”

F “And you trust the food there?”

A “Say what you will, but boxed candy is boxed candy, you know?”

A “Soda machine’s not too bad either.”

-- A “And their hot dogs are always fresh and juicy, but best if you don’t think about where they come from.”

F “I dunno…”

A “It’s eight now, we only have an hour before sundown.”

A “Come on, I’ll keep you safe.”

F “You lost a fight to some stairs.”

A “ They ganged up on me.”

F “If you’re so certain, I guess it’ll be fine?”

“The two of us venture into the evening.”

“The video store is a small building about the size of a minimart.”

“Everyone just calls it ‘the video store’ since the sign fell off ages ago.”

“Inside is a variety of shelves of movies at least a decade old, and a shelf for games from some attempt to appeal to a younger crowd.”

“The lone attendant is reading a magazine when we enter.”

Attendant “If you’re here for the stuff, it’s in the ba- oh.”

Attendant “It’s you.”

“He sighs and folds his magazine away.”

Attendant “You came back again.”

A “Sure, it’s the closest place for a cheap movie.”

Attendant “Yeah, sure.”

Attendant “Make it quick.”

F “That’s not any way to treat a customer…”

“The attendant gives her the side-eye and smirks.”

A “Come on, let’s just get something to watch and bail.”

Attendant “The x-rated section is in the back corner.”

A “Fuck off.”

“He laughs again and -- promptly fucks off flips back to his reading.”

“I gesture to the shelves and start looking with Lucy.”

A “Uhh… We got some old sports movies?”

F “Nahh.”

A “How about this?”

“I pick up a copy of Friday the 13th from the shelf.”

“A most devious plan comes to mind.”

“Lucy, scared, clinging tightly to me for comfort.”

F “Not a fan of the cover.”

-- “Lucy immediately forms a cross with her index fingers.”

-- F “THE POWER OF RAPTOR JESUS COMPELS YOU!”

A “Petty.”

“Damn. We’ll get them next time.”

F “Here’s one that looks neat, ‘Godzilla’.”

A “You into old monster movies?”

F “Not really, but this one looks pretty neat.”

A “Sounds like a plan then.”

“We both fill a shopping bag with junk food and rent the movie.”

“The attendant lights a cigarette as we leave the store.”

A “What’d you get?”

F “Pork rinds and some gummy worms. You?”

A “Mostly chocolate stuff and some plain chips.”

F “If your taste in snacks was as good as your taste in movies, I’m glad I made the pick.”

A “I like what I like.”

A “Least my breath won’t smell like a barbeque for diabetics.”

F “Feh.”

“Back at my place, we both spill our shopping bags out onto the floor like Bonnie and Clyde after a successful heist.”

“Lucy takes the jewel case with our rented entertainment and takes a few seconds to figure out how to get my console to actually play it.”

“I quickly pull some cans of soda from my fridge and slam it shut, praying that the smell of rot didn’t escape.”

L “Anon how do I start it?”

“I hand her a can and take the controller from her.”

“A quick tap and the movie starts up.”

“Lucy and I arrange ourselves into our comfortable blanket nest, the snacks spread around us as the titular rubber suited monster appears on the screen between flashes of dull pyrotechnics.”

“...”

“We spent most of the movie poking fun at the numerous plot holes, over-acting and atrocious dubbing.”

“Not really paying attention to what was happening on the screen, but then these movies were just excuses to watch people in rubber suits kick the shit out of each other anyway.”

“About three quarters through I’m starting to feel drowsy.”

“The snacks are all long gone and I can’t get up for more soda without disturbing the blanket setup.”

“I try not to let it show, but a yawn escapes me.”

“Lucy sees, then yawns herself.”

F “You getting tired, huh?”

A “I’m fine, don’t worry about it.”

F “Here.”

“She wraps her arms around my torso and snugly leans against my shoulder.”

“Her wings follow too, becoming a teepee of feathery warmth.”

F “This’ll keep you awake, right?”

A “Heh. Yeah, thanks.”

“I shift my arm around her waist, drawing her closer.”

“The feathers on her forearm prickle against my shirt.”

“This is the first time we’ve been this close.”

“Well, maybe the second if you include what happened just a few weeks ago.”

“That was a bit different, though.”

“I mean, both of us had to take extra care to make sure my bones didn’t snap -- I didn’t cripple myself before the coming skeleton war.”

“Now that I don’t have to worry about that, I can fully enjoy how well Lucy’s body fits against mine.”

“How her skin feels cool to the touch beneath my palm.”

“How her breathing causes her bosom to push softly against my chest.”

“In short, it’s absolute bliss that I want to stay in.”

“Oh, the credits are rolling already.”

A “Well, that was certainly a movie, right Lu-”

“Lucy’s fallen fast asleep on my shoulder.”

“Her beak hanging right into the crevice of my neck below my chin.”

“Each breath from Lucy blows gently along my neck.”

“I turn the movie off remotely.”

“Guess I’ll be sleeping like this too.”

“In the warm embrace of Lucy, I drift off to a sweet sleep.”

“At least, I would have.”

“*BEEP-BEEP, BEEP-BEEP, BEEP-BEEP*”

“Lucy jolts awake, smacking my jaw upwards.”

A “Agh!”

F “Oh shit, sorry!”

A “What the hell is that sound?”

“Lucy fumbles around and pulls her phone from her pocket.”

“She pushes the button to turn the alarm off.”

F “Crap, I need to go.”

A “Oh. Your dad?”

F “Yeah, I have to be back by ten.”

F “If anyone asks you, I was with Trish.”

A “Yeah, yeah, sure.”

A “Aren’t you still upset with her though?”

F “My dad doesn’t know that.”

A “Ah.”

“Lucy gets her bag and starts looking around to make sure she hasn’t left anything.”

A “Got your charger?”

F “Yeah, yeah.”

A “Wait, how are you getting home?”

F “I was going to call a taxi or something.”

A “You’d have to leave the neighborhood for that, remember?”

A “Taxis don’t come here.”

F “O-oh, right.”

A “Hang on, I’ll go with you.”

“If only I had my dirt bike.”

“I picture how Lucy would wrap her arms around my waist and cling tightly to me.”

“Huh, I wonder how her wings would affect the ride.”

“I now picture Me and Lucy on my dirt bike doing a sick jump.”

“Wicked.”

“I ended up leading Lucy by the hand through the streets to a gas station where her taxi was gonna pick her up.”

A “So…”

F “So?”

A “Today was… nice.”

F “It was. This kind of date was a lot of fun.”

A “Yeah. We gotta do this again.”

F “Mhm. I could ask Ste-”

A “How about we go through my collection next time?”

“Stella I swear to fuck if you ruin my next date…”

F “Okay! It’s a date!”

“The taxi swiftly entered the parking lot, ending our date planning.”

F “I’ll see you at school, Anon.”

“Before I can respond, Lucy places a soft peck on my cheek.”

“Anon.exe has experienced an unknown exception.”

“...”
8.75d (aquarium)

“Every day after school for the next few weeks I would join Fang to help her practice.”

“Some days we would go to her place, and other days her father was home early.”

“Those days Fang would ‘politely ask’ Naser to drop her off at my place.”

“The bribes to keep it from her dad stopped being necessary after the third time.”

“The practice sessions themselves were long and arduous.”

“Sessions would go on until either her dad kicked me out or sundown.”

“Fang would play for hours on end, occasionally stopping to let me try and to take a break.”

“Despite my warnings, she’d play until her fingertips were red and raw.”

“I decided it was time for a real break once I ran out of band aids.”

“My great idea was to take out the map of the city I’d had since I moved in and throw a dart at it to decide where we’d go for the day.”

“There’s lots of neat places in the city for dates, the mall, the arcade, a local amusement park.”

“...And the dart landed in the ocean over the dock.”

“The look from Fang told me she wasn’t stepping anywhere near a tuna boat.”

“The Aquarium it is.”

“So here we are inside after paying admission.”

“I’d suggested she wear some gloves, just to protect her hands.”

“I don’t think she understood the second part, because they were fingerless.”

“The Aquarium is a large marble building on a marina.”

“The various exhibits sprawl out to make the place turtle-shaped from a birds-eye view.”

“It’s a nice place, but I still need to make this entertaining to Fang.”

“She already looks bored.”

“Looking through one of the map kiosks, I try to make a mental plan for the trip.”

A “Uhh… They got exhibits for the deep sea, the gulf of Mexico, --the dopefish, tropical reefs…”

A “... Eenie meanie mini-”

F “Really?”

A “Sea turtles it is.”

“I take Fang’s hand and lead her through the lobby into the chamber labeled ‘Sea Turtle Conservatory’.”

F “Anon, are you sure you want to spend the day here? If you wanted to go to the mall or somethin- omigawd.”

“A little sea turtle swims out of hiding in the tank right in front of us.”

“Immediately Fang breaks free of my arm and presses against the glass.”

F “Look at these cute little shits, I love them!”

A “Yeah, I see them.”

“I peer into the tank and see a few more hatchlings bob out of the decorative grass.”

“The hype becomes contagious and I find myself pressed against the glass as well.”

Attendant “Please avoid touching the glass, it stresses the little guys out.”

A “Oh, sorry.”

A “Come on Fang, there’s more stuff to see.”

F “Nnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnno.”

A “There’s more here than just those baby turtles, you know.”

F “Doesn’t matter.”

A “You’re just going to stay here all day then?”

F “Yyyeeeep.”

A “What’ll you do for lunch?”

F “Bring me something from the cafe.”

A “Allright, here I am going off without you.”

A “Oh look, a Dumbo Octopus.”

F “Whereisit?”

“In a snap Fang’s moved from pressing her face against the turtle tank to pressing it against the octopus tank.”

Attendant “Ma’am, please refrain from-”

F “OmigoshAnonlookatit.”

F “It’s like a living egg yolk with button eyes.”

A “Is that the first analogy you can think of…?”

F “And what’s over there? Are those seahorses holy crap I have to take a video of this.”

“I shrug apologetically at the attendant who has given up entirely.”

“But watching Fang zoom between the exhibits to gush over each oddly cute sea animal was just too much.”

“Subtly my phone finds its way into my jacket pocket, already set to record.”

“She’ll probably kill me if she found out.”

“But it’d be a good death.”

“Wait, where’d she go?”

“I round the corner to see the next room has a large group of school children hovering over a stingray touch tank.”

“That is, a large group of school children and Fang, towering above the rest.”

“She does have the act down though.”

A “Oh, cool, a stingray pool.”

A “You plan on touching one?”

F “Touch?”

A “Yeah, you can put your hand in and they’ll slide against it, watch.”

“I roll up my jacket sleeve and push my hand into the water, splaying it out.”

“Fang and the children lean in intently.”

“The water’s cold, but sure enough, a few of the playful things make their round and slide up right against it like a cat begging for scratches.”

A “See?”

“Several in the crowd start jumping with excitement and put their own hands in the water to try for themselves.”

“Fang doesn’t seem completely convinced, though.”

F “You sure they’re alright to just touch like that? Aren't those dangerous?”

A “I mean, it’s a bit slimy, but there’s a hand sanitizer thing on the wall right there.”

F “That isn’t what I meant.”

A “Come on, I’ll make sure they don’t bite.”

“Fang reluctantly grabs my dry arm and I lead her to a spot not occupied by ankle biters.”

“I put my hand back in and motion for Fang to do the same.”

--”Fang slips the knife out of my pocket and holds it directly above one of the rays.”

--F “This is for Steve!”

“She hesitates with her hand raised just above the waters’ surface, then plunges her hand down next to mine.”

“It doesn’t take long for a few rays to make the corner and brush up against our hands.”

F “Eep!”

A “You alright?”

F “Yeah, no, it’s just… You were right about them being slimy.”

A “Well, I have yet to hear of a dry fish.”

F “Shut up.”

“After a few more rounds of rays, Fang decides she’s had enough.”

A “See, that wasn’t terrible, right?”

A “Actually, you got all your fingers right?”

F “I dunno, wanna check?”

“Her cheeky grin and raised middle finger confirm her hand’s integrity.”

F “So uh…”

F “Which exhibit are we checking next?”

“I check the aquarium pamphlet to see where we haven’t been yet.”

A “Well… if we go outside we can see the dolphin pools. That way it loops back through the deep sea exhibits.”

“With Fang in agreement I lead her towards the exit marked with a large dolphin sign.”

“Upon exiting the building my nose is assaulted by a mix of salty air and the smell of raw fish.”

“Somehow it’s even fishier than inside the aquarium.”

F “Ooh, smells like lunch.”

A “It says they should be feeding the dolphins pretty soon.”

“The walkway circles around a large pool with several dolphins swimming around, and I can make out the trainer holding a hoop with a bucket of fish by their feet.”

“One of the dolphins jumps straight through the hoop and is rewarded with a fish caught out of the air.”

F “Would you jump through a hoola hoop for me if I had treats?”

A “...”

“I notice the trainer has traded the hoop for a large brush and is getting one of the dolphins to open its mouth.”

“The trainer starts brushing the Dolphin’s teeth and showing off the rows of neatly spaced cones.”

“I make a show of craning my neck down to get a view of Fang’s teeth from below.”

“She raises an eyebrow for a second and then realizes.”

“An elbow jams into my shoulder and her other hand covers her snout.”

A “So that’s how you brush your teeth!”

F “...I don’t need someone to bribe me at least.”

A “Well if you ever need help I’m sure I can get them to lend me one of those brushes.”

“And that gets me a jab to the ribs this time.”

A “Oh come on, you have to admit they look a bit like you...”

[Fang dolphin CG?]

F “Ehh, I don’t see it.”

“The dolphin beside her nods in agreement.”

“...Right then…”

A “So, how bout we hit the last spot and then go grab our own lunch?”

A “Unless you want to have some tuna with your clone there.”

“Fang rolls her eyes at that.”

“Her dolphin duplicate did too.”

A “You’re fucking with me, aren’t you.”

F “What’re you talking about?”

“Fang’s aquatic doppelganger makes a laugh-like chirping and finally swims away.”

“...”

A “So Deep Sea then!”

“We leave the dolphin pen, following signs back towards the building.”

“The floor slopes slowly until we reach a door labelled as the sub-level to our destination.”

“Pushing through, we find ourselves in an oversized hamster tube beneath the water.”

“Oh, I didn’t realize they had one of these.”

“From within the glass walkway we’re surrounded by a myriad of colorful marine life swimming around us.”

“Fang’s eyes are wide as she tries to follow the different schools of fish that dart to and fro about.”

“I’m more mesmerized by the water filtered light cascading off Fang, casting her in a gentle glow that illuminates her white feathers.”

“God. So glad I’m recording this.”

F “Recording what?”

A “The uh… The shark! Yeah, that cool liking shark over there!”

“I point to the shark that’s currently lazing about, casually drifting by the walkway.”

“Fang turns to gush at the shark, giving me the opportunity to quickly stop my phone and see that my battery is near dead and memory near full.”

A “Ah, there’s the last exhibit.”

“I hold open another set of doors, the room within near pitch black.”

F “Is it closed?”

A “Hm?”

F “The lights…”

A “Oh! Nah, the room is dark because the things inside aren’t used to light.”

F “O-oh.”

A “Wait… are you sca-”

F “No! I just… Wasn’t expecting it, is all.”

“I offer her my hand.”

“Despite her claim otherwise I can feel how tense she is by how her fingernails dig into my hand.”

“I lead her into the darkened room, what little light there is coming from the various animals within.”

“The aquariums within are packed with bioluminescent jellyfish, illuminating the darkened room with an ethereal glow.”

F “Whoa. This is…”

“Beautiful.”

F “Yeah… that…”

“I wasn’t referring to the exhibit.”

“Fang’s grip on my hand eases, and her fingers work to intertwine with mine.”

“With what little light there is I can make out Fang’s smile.”

“My eyes have adjusted enough that I can see Fang’s eyes locked onto mine, the gossamer light making them glow.”

“My lips press softly onto Fang’s beak-end in a chaste peck.”

F “eep!”

F “Oi! G-give me a warning next time!”

A “Mmmm… Naaaah.”

“I laugh even as her hip bumps me roughly.”

“Our interlocked fingers prevent her from using her preferred elbow tactic.”

A “So… had fun?”

F “Mmmm… Maaaaybe…”

F “I’ll say yes if you delete that recording.”

A “Awwww, but you were so cute!”

F “Sh-shut up! I’m sexy damn it! Not cute!”

A “Why not both?”

“She glowers.”

A “Feel rested?”

F “A bit. I’ll feel even more rested after some lunch though.”

A “Sounds like a plan.”

“The rest of our rest day was spent just relaxing on the pier.”

“Snacks on the boardwalk.”

“A bad sunburn on my neck.”

“And a very relaxed girlfriend.”

“Overall, mission successful.”

“Except the sunburn.”

“Ow.”

“...”

9. prom (ending calculated here)

One month later, it is finally Prom night. Anon picks Fang up at her house. Naomi is at the door in her prom dress, engaging in banter with Anon about her plans to win Prom Queen with Naser.

“-One Month Later-”

“It’s prom night.”

“My old man was kind enough to send over his old tuxedo from his time at high school.”

“It took a bit of sewing, but I got it looking pretty good.”

“Judging by the wine stains on the sleeves, Dad’s made a lot of important announcements in this tuxedo.”

“Gives it a bit of history, I guess.”

“When I arrive at Fang’s place with a cheap corsage I see the Pomegranate Parasite waiting outside the front door.”

“Great.”

“And dear god, how can she move in that dress.”

“It looks like it’s been shrink-wrapped to her body.”

N “Oh, I already knocked Anon.”

N “Naser will be out in a moment to invite us in, I’m sure Fang will be getting ready too.”

N “I’ve heard the two of you are going to prom together!”

“Ladies and gentlemen, the next Sherlock Holmes.”

A “No, I just happen to be here in a suit to go golfing.”

“I ignore her, focusing instead on not stabbing my palm even more on this flower’s thorns.”

“Fuck it, free is free.”

“And nothing more free than a five finger discount from the neighbor’s yard.”

N “You and Fang just make the cutest couple! Did you two sign up for prom king and queen?”

A “Nah. She said something about the ‘facist sexist monarchy system’.”

-- A “Honestly kinda cringe and bluepilled.”

N “Well, Naser and I have entered and we are going to be prom royalty. Ooooh, I can not wait to wear that beautiful tiara --Plastic Disney Princess tiara, I picked it out and everything and the crown--Burger King cardboard crown for Naser-”
[Naomi keikaku here]

“I’ve already tuned her out.”

“Naser opens the door.”

“Well if that isn’t the fanciest jacket I’ve seen in a while.”

“It’s certainly better than the background of Avatar he always wears.”

Nas “Sorry to keep you waiting, Naomi.”

Nas “This thing is a nightmare to get over my wings.”

Nas “Oh, Anon! Come on in, didn’t know you were already here.”

“He waves for the two of us to enter, pecking Naomi on the cheek when she passes.”

“Fang’s Mother speaks up from the kitchen.”

FangMom “Oh! Oh! Is that Anon?”

Nas “Here we go.”

“The small pterodactyl comes out, a bowl she’s struggling to stir in her arms.”

FangMom “My, aren’t you handsome.”

FangMom “Pictures! I need to get pictures of you and Lucy!”

“She sets the bowl aside on the coffee table to frantically search for a polaroid camera.”

FangMom “To think Lucy would have such a wonderful young man to take her to prom!”

FangMom “Aha! Found it. Hold still, dear.”

“ARGH! Like getting slapped in the face by the sun’s dick!”

“I blink the blindness away. So that’s why Naser has those fucking aviators.”

FangMom “Lucy will be downstairs in a bit, she’s just getting the last of her makeup on!”

FangMom “In the meantime, take a seat! I’ve got some cookies in the oven that are almost ready!”

A “Er, yes, thank you ma’am.”

“I take my seat in the usual spot, sinking in and feeling the pillows conform around my spine.”

“This thing must cost a fortune.”

“Fang’s dad is a police commissioner if I recall.”

“That explains the luxurious furnishings.”

“Now that I think about it, I’m surprised I haven’t seen him yet.”

FangDad “So…”

“I hope I didn’t just ruin these slacks.”

A “Good evening, sir.”

A “I didn’t even see you in your chair, sir.”

A “My apologies.”

FangDad “Don’t sweat it, son.”

FangDad “Thing about humans, as well as many carnivores, is that their vision is based largely on movement.”

FangDad “You’d be surprised how useful staying quiet and stationary can be.”

FangDad “How close you can get to someone without them knowing-”

FangMom “Sweetheart.”

FangMom “No. Intimidating. The Suitor.”

“The big guy deflates a bit in his chair.”

FangDad “Point is, don’t get any funny ideas.”

A “Yessir.”

N “We’re all taking the NasCar, right?”

Nas “Yeah, yeah.”

Nas “Once Fang gets down we’ll skedaddle.”

A “So until then we just sit and chill?”

N “We could take more pictures!”

Nas/A “Please no.”

FangMom “Oh! I would love to make this a little photo op!”

“Thirty photos later and I never want to see another camera again.”

“Fang’s mom decided to take pictures of every possible combination of us.”

“I don’t know which was worse, having to pose with Naomi or Fang’s dad digging his murder claws into my shoulder.”

“I’ve lost nearly all feeling in that arm.”

“Pretty sure that’ll leave a bruise worse than my accelerated hug with the stair bollard last month.”

“At least the pics with Naser were a nice reprieve.”

“We ended up looking like the blues brothers, standing side by side in fuck ugly suits.”

“Just as I was about to resign myself to premature blindness--not from cooming from the camera flash, my saviour arrives.”

F “Oh, Anon, you’re already here!”

9a (fang loses it after losing prom queen)
Fang comes downstairs in unisex formal wear. She returns the banter to Naomi, and they engage in a petty catfight.

At Prom, Anon is supporting the wall and his feet hurt. Fang is trying to raise hype for her show by patronizing everyone around. Reed is the DJ with suspiciously

large sunglasses and Trish is handing out flyers for the band's summer tour. Principal Spears is in a suit that's a bit too small for him, and goes onstage to announce the Prom King and Queen. Spears announces that Naomi and Naser have won Prom King and Queen. After Naomi gives a celebratory speech, Spears announces that there will be a special musical number. Fang has gone back to being the second Bass in the band in a desperate attempt to be unique, and Reed is fiddling with his soundboard.
The song goes horribly, and Spears has to cut the show short. Fang and Anon leave the school, and Fang is still irreconcilable. Anon offers that they return to his place to play some games or something, and Fang just nods with tears still falling from her eyes. Anon tries to console Fang the rest of the night, but she seems 'too far away' from him.

“Fang comes downstairs in a fancy getup.”

“It’s certainly… Less traditional than mine.”

“No less flattering though.”

“Legs for days and days.”

FangMom “Oh, I was hoping you would wear the dress I bought you sweetheart.”

F “Mooooom. This is better, it’s gender neutral formal wear!”

“Looks more like she took some dickies and made them into some booty shorts.”

“Not that I’m complaining.”

“The word plump is quite apt right now.”

N “Oh, Fang…”

N “That’s an… Interesting outfit you’re wearing.”

“Naomi side-eyes me a dagger.”

N “I thought you’d be wearing some kind of dress…”

F “Nah, dresses aren’t my style.”

N “I-I see…”

N “Well your outfit certainly… pairs well with Anon’s.”

F “Oh I love your dress too, you look just like a giant pink dildo!”

FangMom “Lucy!”

F “What did I say about that! I already told you, my name is Fang!”

“Fang’s mom just sighs.”

FangMom “Okay, sorry, Fang. But please, you don’t need to use that kind of language towards guests!”

F “...Whatever…”

A “Maybe we should just go…”

F “I’m not sharing a ride with her.”

N “Well, if you insist, Fang. Before you go… Anon, can I speak with you for a second?”

“Before I can even say anything, Naomi’s dragging me by the shoulder into the kitchen.”

“She gives me a death stare for what seems like a solid minute before she begins yelling at me”

N “What the hell is your problem, Anon?!”

“I think it’s the first time I’ve ever heard Naomi raise her voice, or even swear.”

N “How in the fuck did you manage to make Fang worse?”

A “I… What the hell are you talking about?”

“Naomi begins to somehow look even more earth-shatteringly mad.”

N “I thought you were gonna make her better!”

A “What the fuck do you mean, ‘make her better’?”

A “She’s just fine, alright? --I just wanna grill for god’s sake!”

N “It’s like you didn’t even try to help her.”

A “I did the best I could, okay!”

A “I certainly did more than whatever you’ve ever done for her.”

A “And you know what, she’s her own person! If she’s happy, I’m happy.”

“Naomi’s face of sheer anger quickly turns to disgust.”

--”It was like she was looking at human garbage”

N “I can’t believe you. You really don’t get it.”

“Naomi sighs and walks away, shoving into my shoulder on the way out, completely disregarding my presence.”

N “Just go, get out of here.”

N “This conversation is over.”

“I can hear Fang arguing with her parents in the other room with Naomi not yelling at me anymore.”

“I place my hands in my pockets, turn around, and head back into the foyer.”

“My walking slows, and the hall feels like it stretches onwards for miles.”

“Could Naomi be right? About Fang?”

“No, no, she can’t be right!”

“Fang is happy with herself, for once.”

“The arguing from the other room quickly and very loudly breaks my train of thought and I stride back to where everybody is gathered.”

FangDad “...That is no way to talk to your mother, young lady!”

F “I’m not a fuckin’ lady, dad!”

“Naomi’s leaned against a wall next to the entry to that hall.”

“She turns to me, with an expression of very intently restrained rage on her face.”

“Did I really do this, Naomi?”

N “Maybe you should leave before this turns into a fight.”

“Naomi’s words were cold but probably true.”

“Fang looked ready to set her house on fire until she caught me in the corner of her eye.”

“Without a word she grabbed me by the wrist and dragged me through the front door, guitar in her other hand.”

F …’mme call a taxi or something.”

“We sit on the curb in silence until our ride arrives.”

“It’s the same velociraptor driver from before. Of course it is.”

“I open the door for Fang as she fits her guitar in the back seat.”

Driver “Ay, it’s my favorite couple again! How’s the leg, skinnie?”

“The driver chuckles at his own remark.”

A “We’re doing fine, take us to Volcano high.”

Driver “Prom I’m guessing? Ya’ two high school sweet-hearts should stay safe out there! Crazy worl’ out there innit’?”

-- Driver ”Nice suit by the way, skinnie. Where’dchya get it? The suit store?”

A “Yeah I guess...”

Driver “Not too much party in you. You sure you guys are going to prom?”

A “We’re sure.”

Driver “Well, if you say so.”

“The cab starts down the street at what was easily twice the speed limit.”

“The engine is surprisingly quiet, and leaves the silence awkward between the three of us.”

“In the mirror, the Drivers’ eyes start showing a bit of concern.”

“He glances towards the radio.”

A “Please don’t.”

Driver “Mmm.”

“He gives a disappointed look through the reflection.”

Driver “...”

Driver “You kids uh…”

Driver “You feel like stopping by a restaurant or something by any chance?”

Driver “I know a good Chinese place around here…”

Driver “I can wait outside if you two want to, y’know… I won't even add onto the bill...”

F “I’m on a schedule.”

F “We’ll pass.”

A “No Thanks.”

Driver “Sure, sure.”

“The Driver sighs a little”

“Eventually the cab pulls up to the school gymnasium, illuminated by the

celebratory decorative string lights.”

“Fang opens her wallet to pay the toll.”

Driver “Uhh… Y’know what, it’s on the house this time, kids.”

A “Wait, really?”

Driver “Sure, yeah.”

Driver “Just have fun, y’know, and uhh…”

Driver “If you need a cab again, you know the number.”

F “We know, we know.”

F “Get lost.”

A “See you.”

“The taxi pulls away from the curb and rounds the corner back onto the main road.”

F “We still got about an hour before Spears told us to be on.”

A “Sounds like we got plenty of time.”

F “You’d be surprised. Come on.”

“I considered carrying the guitar case for her, but Fang is already a couple yards ahead power walking to prom.”

“Fang leads the way to the school’s gymnasium. Her shoulders are tense and her wings are raised higher than usual.”

“I pick up the pace to try and catch up, but Fang’s long legs only moved faster.”

A “What song are you going to play?”

F “Just something simple me and Trish wrote up, why?”

A “Just curious about what's going to knock the prom out of the park, what about Reed?”

F “He was busy.”

“The two of us go up to the entrance, the room filled with seniors, strobe lights and a very suspicious smelling fog.”

“Reed and Trish were over in a corner, both with red solo cups.”

“I didn’t need to question what was in Reed’s.”

“Reed noticed us first and waved us over.”

R “Yooo buddy, how's it going? Ready to see us kill it up on the stage?”

A “Yeah man! Fang said you guys were going to keep it pretty simple with what's up there?”

R “Yeah, don’t want to do something super complex, just wanna keep it simple and cool for these guys.”

A “When are you guys starting?”

R “Forty-five minutes.”

F “Forty-five? Shit I thought we were later than that, we need to start getting prepped.”

“We hauled ass to Mr.Jingo’s room, where the band had stored their gear.”

“Reed’s drumset was in pieces and I helped him reassemble it while Trish and Fang tuned their guitars.”

“{i}*TWANG*{/i}”

F “SHIT!”

“I dropped the snare drum I held at that.”

“Fang’s guitar string had snapped.”

“Trish and Fang look devastated.”
A “Don’t you have a spare?”

F “...At home…”

T “There’s got to be some here! Reed! Anon! Look arou-”

F “We don’t have time!”

A “What? But-”

R “A spare guitar, maybe?”

F “We do not have the time!”

A “Look me and Reed can-”

F “ANON YOU’RE NOT HELPING!”

F “Look Anon, we just need to focus right now.”

F “Just go outside so we can figure something out.”

“Her words cut straight through me.”

“She’s really kicking me out right now.”

--“Here I stand, broken hearted. Wanted to shit but only farted.”
--“Bars.”

F “Please, Anon?”

“Reed is silent and I catch a glimpse of a smirking speciesist triceratops.”

“I begin to formulate a response, but just manage a small nod.”

A “I- Yeah… sure…”

“Dejected, I --turn 360 degrees and make my way to the door back to prom.”

“Fang hasn’t yelled at me like that since… the beginning of the semester.”

--“Not gonna lie, it’s kinda kinky.”

“But playing at prom seemed pretty important to Fang and who am I to interfere with

that?”

“I didn’t even want to be here in the first place, but…”

“But I’m following Moe’s advice and supporting Fang, right?”

“The music slams into me as I reenter the room, grating on my ears and thrumming roughly in my chest.”

“A quick pass of the punch bowl and I find the ideal spot.”

“In the darkened corner, where I can support the wall with my back and sip on my cheap punch.”

“My feet grow sore as I observe the other seniors having fun.”

“Every now and then one of them would point at me and snicker.”

“I simply hide my face behind my solo cup and try to drown out their judging eyes behind sugary water.”

Sp “Enjoying yourself, Anon?”

“I nearly choke on the fruit punch.”

A “P-principal Spears! Uh… You’re chaperoning?”

Sp “I wouldn’t ask any of the faculty to look after you lot.”

A “Hm…”

Sp “You enjoying your prom?”

A “Could be worse.”

Sp “Where’s your date, I thought I saw the two of you enter.”

Sp “Weren’t you all getting ready in the music room?”

A “We were…”

A “Something came up… She asked me to leave.”

Sp “Fang did?”

A “Yeah, I was just getting in the way.”

Sp “I see.”

“The two of us stare into the crowd’s mindless frolicking in silence.”

Sp “Seems there’s something else on your mind, Anon.”

Sp “I can tell these things.”

A “Not really, it’s just that I’m respecting her boundaries.”

Sp “...”

Sp “Are you sure that’s what’s really going on here?”

“Ugh, here we go.”

Sp “Back when I was in the game, I learned a thing or two about-”

“I sigh and tune out the massive man standing next to me.”

“I swirl the punch in my cup around before chugging the last of it.”

“...I just want to go home…”

Sp “-ake responsibility and take it seriously.”

Sp “Relationships are a give and take sort of deal.”

Sp “Got it, Anon?”

A “...Sure, sir. I’ll keep that in mind.”

“The principal sighs and leaves me.”

“Everyone moves out of his way as he cuts his way across the room to the small stage.”

“The music fades until all that’s left is chatter.”

“Spears takes to the stage with mic in hand for once.”

Sp “Alright everyone. Before we end tonight’s prom we have a couple of items to take care of.”

Sp “First thing is-”

“The principal pulls a tiny gold sheaf envelope from his lapel and holds it up for the audience to gawk at.”

Sp “to announce prom King and Queen.”

“Well this is a foregone conclusion.”

“A few students are already congratulating Naser as he’s led by the arm by his handler.”

Sp “A drum roll, please.”

“Reed steps onto the stage with a small block in his arms.”

“He smiles and nods, pressing one of the myriad of buttons on the block.”

“A mediocre recording of the drumline plays over the speakers as Spears clears his throat and tears open the envelope.”

Sp “And your winners.”

Sp “For the one Mil.”

Sp “Twenty-twenty class.”

Sp “Aaaaaare….”

Sp “Naaaaaser aaaaand Naaaaoooomiiiiii!”

“He tosses the paper over his shoulder and yanks out the crowns from a pocket inside his jacket.”

“Spears backs out of the spotlight, giving a polite applause to the pair as they rush onstage to accept.”

“The rest of the class is in a celebratory uproar.”

“Spears offers the crowns to Naomi, who puts the larger one on Naser’s crest to droop off, and then dons the tiara..”

“The whole moment is picturesque, just like Naomi wanted.”

N “Thank you all so much, Volcano High!”

N “This is such an honor to receive.”

N “My, I don’t really have a speech prepared. But…”

N “In just one short year, we-”

Sp “Alright, alright, let’s stay on schedule.”

Sp “I promised your parents we’d be out of here by ten.”

Sp “To close off this wonderful night, I’ve asked a student band to play a few bops for us.”

Sp “They’ve had their trials earlier in the year, but I think everyone deserves a second chance.”

Sp “Please welcome, VVURM DRAMA!!!!”

“The audience’s applause decreases noticeably.”

??? “Wait, again?”

??? “He was there last time, wasn’t he?”

??? “I’ll just start recording…”

“Feh. Screw ‘em.”

“Fang’ll show them how much they’ve all improved.”

“I should be memorizing their faces now to make their dumbstruck expressions that much sweeter.”

“I know Fang can pull this off.”

“Reed wheels the drumkit onstage on a dolly, and Trish follows with her bass.”

“And then Fang comes on with her bass as well.”

“Wait.”

“Wait no.”

“They couldn’t find a new string?!”

“They’re just going to repeat the first concert?!”

“What were they thinking?!”

“The three finish making last minute preparations and give an anxious look at one another.”

“For a brief moment, Fang looks me right in the eyes.”

“I think we all know what’s about to happen.”

“The band doesn’t bother introducing themselves. Instead Trish begins plucking her bass.”

“It all went tumbling down from there.”

“Just like before, Fang’s bass sounds horrifically wrong, far too heavy. She’s a guitarist using a fucking jazz bass, so of course it sounds horrid.”

“And then the vocals kicked in. Reed’s lyrical expertise was not on display here, no these sounded like they came from an edgy teen’s twitter page.”

“It’s horrific screeching, combined with the amelodious shredding on a bass creating a cacophony equal to hundreds of cats ritualistically sacrificed.”

??? “PFFFT AHAHAHA THEY STILL FUCKING SUCK AFTER SIX MONTHS!!”

“The crowd’s cautious cheers were long gone, replaced by a symphony of ridicule.”

“The band’s already accepted their fate, both basses hang limply from their shoulder straps.”

“Then a few students start chucking balled up tissues at their heads.”

“Reed puts his hand on Trish’s shoulder and the two duck out.”

“Fang stays a moment longer, the despair on her face manifesting through hot streams of tears.”

“She turns to leave as well, trying to maintain a calm composure.”

“Then a student throws their red plastic cup of punch upstage.”

“It splashes against her head, drenching her suit in red dye and making her smash onto the floor.”

“A few more food articles follow while Fang scrambles to get up.”

“Shakily, she tries walking offstage again, only to be met with another makeshift water balloon.”

“The back of her suit shines a dull red in the stage lights, and she struggles to not slip again.”

“Spears rushes onstage and throws his coat over Fang.”

“Naser was about to jump off the stage and tackle someone.”

“Except Naomi had her arms around his waist.”

Sp “ENOUGH!”

“The room goes completely silent aside from the sounds of Fang’s sprinting footsteps and sobbing.”

“Spear’s lazer gaze is directed at me.”

“He jams his thumb in the direction of the exit Fang just took.”

“I slip out the side door towards the music room once again.”

“Trish and Reed were sitting in the far corner of the room, and Fang was nowhere to be seen.”

R “Hey, man…”

T “Great, what do YOU want?”

R “Fang’s not here, dude.”

A “Where’d she go?”

R “Probably the auditorium.”

R “To be alone.”

T “We’re doing fine too, not that you care. Asshole.”

A “You’re right, Trish.”

T “I, whu-”

A “I don’t care, I need to find Fang. Now.”

R “That was uncalled for, man.”

A “And so is this.”

“*SLAM*”

“It felt so satisfying to slam the door in their useless faces.”

“I turn around and leave, flipping off Trish through the window as I go.”

“She probably blames me for this show going wrong too.”

“That I sabotaged Fang’s guitar because it would make Trish look bad or something.”

“I run to the auditorium with only the sound of my footsteps echoing through the hallway.”

“I stop at the foyer to catch my breath.”

“My hands rest on the door, ready to push it open.”

“What do I even say to her?”

“‘Just bear with it?’ ‘You still have friends?’”

“All of that’s terrible.”

“At the same time, I can’t just stall here.”

“I push open the door softly.”

“The light spills through the foyer into the darkened chamber.”

“Spear’s jacket is thrown over one of the seats near me.”

“The door shuts behind me, leaving me in the dark.”

“I can only stand in the night-veiled room for my eyes to adjust.”

“From somewhere in the room, a faint sobbing echoes.”

A “Fang? You alright?”

“Great opener. Fantastic.”

A “I mean, are you gonna be alright?”

“The sobbing continues for a bit longer.”

F “... Nooo…”

“I slowly follow her voice down the aisle, using the chairs as my guide.”

“By this point I can vaguely make out Fang sitting at the bottom of the stage.”

A “Fang?”

“I’m standing before her now, and my eyes have adjusted just enough to make out some details of Fang’s face.”

“Such as her eyes looking… off…”

A “Uh… Fang?”

F “I didn’t fuck up.”

A “Huh?”

F “I didn’t fuck up. Right, Anon?”

A “...Nah… You did your best up there.”

“Fang’s voice started to take on a hiss.”

F “Yeah… Yeah… it’s all their fault. Right?”

A “Whose?”

F “Who the fuck else! Naser and that BITCH!”

F “Fucking Naomi. She ruined this. She caused this all.”

F “If she had never come into my life.”

F “If she was never around Naser.”

F “If-”

A “Fang!”

“That startles Fang, making her mouth click shut.”

A “Look, forget all of that. It doesn’t matter. None of it matters.”

F “I-”

A “Naomi doesn’t matter at all. She and her stupid plan don’t fucking matter.”

F “...”

“My eyes have finally focused enough to make out the smashed bass at Fang’s feet.”

“I ignore it, instead reaching out for Fang’s shoulder.”

“She flinches under my touch, which makes my heart heavy.” --And my bladder full to bursting.

A “Hey…”

A “I want you to do something for me, alright?”

A “Just repeat after me.”

A “Alright?”

“She doesn’t look at me, but nods her head a bit.”

A “It doesn’t matter.”

F “...it… It doesn’t matter.”

F “It doesn’t matter.”

“The hiss is back but I ignore it.”

F “It doesn’t matter.”

A “See? Feel better, right?”

F “Y-yeah. I guess.”

F “Thanks, Anon.”

A “Good.”

A “So.”

A “Uh.”

F “...I don’t wanna be here.”

A “Oh.”

A “... Do you need me to walk you home?”

F “...”

F “Actually…”

F “I uh…”

F “Can I…”

F “Stay at your place?”

F “I… Don’t want to see Naser right now…”

“I can feel my face practically glow at that thought.”

A “S-sure. Of course!”

A “Come on, let’s go home, Fang.”

“...”

“When I enter my apartment I remove my suit jacket and toss it on the floor unceremoniously.”

“I loosen the tie, but don’t bother to take it all the way off.”

“Fang collapses in my cot without a word.”

“Guess I’m sleeping on the floor tonight.”

A “You going to sleep already?”

F “...Nooo…”

“I frown as I see her hair sticky and clinging to her dumb dress shirt.”

A “Maybe you should take a shower. At least rinse the punch off.”

F “...”

A “I’ve uh… I think I got some clothes for ya.”

F “...’kay…”

“Fang gets up from my bed and trudges over to my bathroom.”

“Right. Clothes.”

“I open my closet and look at all my identical jackets.”

“Bulk buying seemed like a good idea at the time.”

“I take an older black hoodie I have. It’s super baggy even on me.”

“I think this was from that time I tried to cosplay.”

“I shudder at the memory.”

“I take that and some board shorts from my closet and kick it shut.”

“Okay I think this should… wait.”

“Wings and tail.”

“...”

“Some minutes later with my knife and I hear the shower sputter to a stop.”

“I knock on the door and set the custom cut outfit on the floor for her.”

A “I set a change of clothes for you. Yell if you need me to do some more cutting.”

“With that I go back to my bed and consider what to do next.”

“Maybe a movie or something?”

“Fuck. What would cheer her up.”

F “...Thanks…”

“Fang plops down next to me, the hoodie falling down to her knees and hiding the shorts I gave her.”

“If only she wasn’t so depressed she’d look really cute right now.”

A “So… Wanna do something?”

F “Play a game or something, I dunno…”

F “I don’t want to sleep yet.”

A “Uhh… Sure…”

“Fuck me sideways, what do I have that’s presentable to someone else…”

“I got uhh… Kingdom he-no…”

“Dark so-no…”

“Senran- I feel retarded for even considering it, FUCK NO…”

“Screw it, I'll just go with Rock Ring. That always calms you down.”

“Don’t get many opportunities these days to use The Duke, anyways.”

“I boot up the XROX and insert the Rock Ring 2 disc.”

“Fang flips over to see the TV as I take my spot on the floor sitting next to her.”

A “This one’s my favorite Rock Ring story.”

“I let the campaign intro play and turn to Fang.”

“She is just blankly staring at the screen, probably still thinking about earlier.”

A “You uhhh… wanna play first?”

A “Might help take your mind off prom…”

“Fang lets out a muffled sigh at that.”

F “I can just watch…”

--A “See you get to play from the dino’s perspective, where every single level revolves around genocide, slaughter and betrayal. Just like real life!”

“I decide to skip the cutscenes and get right into the gameplay.”

“Repelling a bunch of dinosaurs from the volcano caves, easy enough.”

A “Playing with a torch and rock combo is the easiest way to kill enemies.”

A “Takes more skill than using a spear thrower at least.”

F “Yeah, cool…”

--A “Hey Fang, what do you think about this scene where the character is humiliated and then set loose to genocide his enemies.

F “Hey, Anon… You said something about Naomi having a ‘plan’ earlier. What did you mean by that?”

“Shit.”

“Uh oh, gotta tread real carefully here…”

A “Thing is, uh… you know when I just transferred in and everything?”

F “Yeah?”

A “Well uh, Naomi kept… No, it’s nothing. Forget I said anything.”

“Fang sits up and is eye level with me.”

F “It’s not nothing. What. Did. She. Do?”

A “Now’s not a good time, we should talk about it lat-”

“Fang grabs me by the shirt collar with shaking fists.”

F “Tell me!”

F “TELL ME YOU WORM --VVURM!!”

A “I-I-I can’t! Fang, get a hold of yourself!”

“She jumps to her feet, carrying my shirt with her and lurching my head with it.”

F “DAMMIT ANON, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN PLANNING WITH NAOMI?!”

“Her free hand raises into a slashing position, clenched into a claw so her nails protrude like razors.”

F “TELL ME OR I’LL-”

A “SHE PUT ME WITH YOU!”

“All at once, Fang loses all energy in her body.”

“Her grip on my collar loosens and her clawed hand lowers.”

“All the tension has moved directly to her face.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen such a look of hopeless despair.”

“After what feels like a year of silence, I get the courage to stand again.”

A “...”

A “...Naomi made it so the two of us were together.”

A “Naser’s always worrying about you, so she wanted to get his full attention…”

A “...By trying to have someone ‘fix’ you.”

“Fang’s hands cradle her head, as though squeezing it hard enough would wake her up from this nightmare.”

A “Fang, I didn’t have any control over it…”

A “You know I really do have feelings for you, I genuinely like you.”

-- F “uguu you really mean it?”

A “It doesn’t matter what Naomi’s stupid ‘plans’ are, we still-”

“Out of nowhere Fang’s energy returns into a fit of unrepressed rage.”

F “RAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHH!!”

F “THAT STUPID BITCH!!”

F “THAT, THAT, THAT GODDAMN SLUT!!”

A “Fang! Calm down!”

F “SHUT THE FUCK UP!!”

F “YOU LITERAL, ACTUAL TOOL!!”

“Fang, with no intention to vent her frustrations verbally, resorts to the next best thing.”

“Physical therapy.”

“The bedsheets are quickly discarded to the other side of the room in a clump.”

A “Fang, please!”

“Fang is convulsing as though possessed, frantically looking for other things to ruin.”

“With a swift kick, the Duke is catapulted into the bathroom.”

“Hope Fang’s foot --toesiewoesies is okay.”

A “Calm down! Don’t break anything!”

“She starts kicking and punching the nearby shelf with all her might.”

-- A “Hey, stop that, I need my security deposit or I’ll be sleeping on the streets!”

A “Fang, stop, you’ll hurt yourself!”

“My pleas are ignored, instead all I get are continued desperate grunts as she tries to pummel the wooden door.”

A “Fang, really, you need to stop-”

“With one last scream -- REEEEEEEEEE, she punches clean through the shelf’s cabinet door, leaving a hole about the size of a football.”

-- ??? “SUCH A LUST FOR REVENGE!”

-- ??? “WHOOOOO?!”

-- A “Aaaaand there goes my security deposit. Yay.”

A “THAT’S ENOUGH -- YOUNG LADY!”

“While Fang is recoiling, I take the moment to grab her by the wrists and rush her over to sit -- pomf on the bed.”

--F “What are we gonna do on your bed Anon?”

-- A “You tell me, mademoiselle…”

“Tears are streaming down her face as I shift my grip to her arms.”

F “I can’t even fall in love without HER interfering with it!”

F “You don’t like me, you just wanted to change me to something I’m not to get Naomi off your back.”

A “That’s not true! Fang, listen to me. I do lo-”

“Before I can finish, Fang plants her foot on my chest and --Falcon Kicks pushes me

away with all her strength.”

-- “I dark souls ninjaflip around her and backstab her with my fire zweihander.”

-- “I then tell her to git gud, casual.”

“The force makes me stumble back several feet.”

“Luckily, I manage to regain my balance before falling on my ass.”

-- A “I don’t want to do this, Fang.”

“I raise my hands in a basic CQC stance.”

F “You took me away from my friends! You ruined our band!”

A “What the hell are you talking about? I haven’t done any of that!”

F “Well, Naomi is, and, and…”

F “You’re just doing whatever Naomi wants!”

A “Well then maybe Naomi had a point!”

“A deafening silence permeates the room.”

“The malice radiating from Fang is as tense as a razor.”

“Eventually, the weight of the situation causes her to collapse into the bed completely.”

“Between sobs Fang tries squealing out more of her argument.”

F “Just-just shut up… I don’t…”

F “I…”

A “Here’s the reality, Fang.”

A “There are things about you that need fixing.”

A “That much I can agree with Naomi.”

A “And clearly, I can’t help you there.”

F “...”

A “...”

“Fang’s body tremors with her sobs.”

“Shit, was I too harsh on her?”

A “Fang… I’m sorry.”

A “*sigh*”

A “You’re right, I took you away from your friends and all that.”

A “I caused all this.”

F “No.”

F “You wish.”

F “That would be too much of an honor for you.”

-- “She’s right. I am an honorless dog. There is only one way to atone.”

-- “I reach for my plastic tanto and lay out a white mat, preparing to commit sudoku in the manner of weeaboos of old.”

“The phrase cuts to the bone.”

“I retrieve the bedsheets from the floor.”

A “Look…”

A ''You're tired, I'm tired, let's just sleep and think it over tomorrow''

“As I drape the blanket over her shoulders, she reaches out to squeeze my hand.”

A “... I do love you, Fang.”

F “...”

A “...”

F “...”

-- “///>-<///”

“She lets go.”

A “... Goodnight.”

“Fang curls into my blanket, staring at the wall away from me.”

“I hit the light switch and lie down across the room from the bed.”

“I’d use the felt blanket that exists in every house, but I’d frankly rather just sleep in my clothes.”

“The moonlight leaking through the curtain gives enough visibility for me to see Fang still silently weeping.”

“I watch from afar until her breathing becomes slow and rhythmic, the sort only achievable in a deep sleep.”

“What am I supposed to do about her?”

“I’ll talk with her more about it in the morning…”

“For now I’ll just try to get some shut-eye.”

“My heavy eyelids practically glue themselves shut, and I’m asleep within five minutes.”

“...”
9b (fang breaks up with anon)
NOTE SETUP DOES NOT APPLY TO SCENARIO 9B
On the night Prom would be, Fang and Anon go to the beach for a bonfire. Anon brought alcohol, and Fang brought a boombox. They spend the night talking to each

other about how dumb everything is, school, prom, their 'friends', life. As Anon gets drunker, Fang gets more frustrated with him and his egotistical attitude. Anon is complaining about his own life like he's the only one with issues, and when confronted by Fang about it, he laughs it off, citing her 'nonbinary stupidity' in a drunken slur, setting her off, having her break up with Anon. She leaves Anon in the grass, and he passes out drunk.

“-One Month Later-”

“It’s prom night.”

“The night Fang and I set aside for our own little party.”

“When I arrive at Fang’s place I see the Pomegranate Parasite waiting outside the front door.”

“Great.”

“And dear god, how can she move in that dress.”

“It looks like it’s been shrink-wrapped to her body.”

N “Oh, I already knocked Anon.”

N “Naser will be out in a moment to invite us in, I’m sure Fang will be getting ready too.”

N “... You, uh… Don’t seem very dressed for prom?”

A “Not going.”

N “But you and Fang just make the cutest couple! You could have signed up for prom King and Queen!”

A “She actually said something about the ‘facist sexist monarchy system’.”

-- A “Honestly kinda cringe and bluepilled.”

N “Well, Naser and I have entered and we are going to be prom royalty. Ooooh, I can not wait to wear that beautiful tiara --Plastic Disney Princess tiara, I picked it out and everything and the crown--Burger King cardboard crown for Naser-”
[Naomi keikaku here]

“I’ve already tuned her out.”

“Naser opens the door.”

“Well if that isn’t the fanciest jacket I’ve seen in a while.”

“It’s certainly better than the background of Avatar he always wears.”

Nas “Sorry to keep you waiting, Naomi.”

Nas “This thing is a nightmare to get over my wings.”

Nas “Oh, Anon! Come on in, didn’t know you were already here.”

“He waves for the two of us to enter, pecking Naomi on the cheek when she passes.”

“Fang’s Mother speaks up from the kitchen.”

FangMom “Oh! Oh! Is that Anon?”

Nas “Here we go.”

“The small pterodactyl comes out, a bowl she’s struggling to stir in her arms.”

FangMom “Oh! Anon’s come over too!.”

FangMom “Are you two going to prom as well?”

A “No, I’m just visiting for a bit. Fang doesn’t want to go.”

A “Where are they?”

FangMom “Lucy will be downstairs in a bit, she’s just getting the last of her makeup on!”

FangMom “In the meantime, take a seat! I’ve got some cookies in the oven that are almost ready!”

A “Er, yes, thank you ma’am.”

“I take my seat in the usual spot, sinking in and feeling the pillows conform around my spine.”

“This thing must cost a fortune.”

“Fang’s dad is a police commissioner if I recall.”

“That explains the luxurious furnishings.”

“Now that I think about it, I’m surprised I haven’t seen him yet.”

FangDad “So…”

“I hope I didn’t just ruin these jeans.”

A “Good evening, sir.”

A “I didn’t even see you in your chair, sir.”

A “My apologies.”

FangDad “Don’t sweat it, son.”

FangDad “Thing about humans, as well as many carnivores, is that their vision is based largely on movement.”

FangDad “You’d be surprised how useful staying quiet and stationary can be.”

FangDad “How close you can get to someone without them knowing-”

FangMom “Sweetheart.”

FangDad “Oh come on, you can’t expect me to believe he’s only here for a visit on the school’s prom night!”

FangMom “No. Intimidating. The Suitor.”

“The big guy deflates a bit in his chair.”

FangDad “Point is, don’t get any funny ideas.”

A “Yessir.”

FangMom “Oh Naser, you just look so cute with Naomi in that dashing little jacket!”

FangMom “Pictures! I need pictures!”

FangMom “Oh, we should get a new scrapbook just for this!”

“Naser worriedly looks at me as though I’d let him down somehow.”

“My phone buzzes and I check to see who it is.”

“Fang: got out through the window, meet me at the bus stop”

“Anon: why didnt you have me wait there in the first place???”

“Fang: forgot dad wouldnt let us leave on our own in a million years”

“Fang: just make something up and get out of there”

“I shift a bit in my seat, and Fang’s father notices my face has a gone a bit pale.”

FangDad “Something wrong, son?”

A “Uhh, yeah.”

“I get up from the sofa and start inching towards the door.”

A “Sorry, I gotta go early.”

“He squints distrustfully.”

FangDad “Already? Lucy hasn’t even come downstairs yet.”

A “Yeah, sorry. Emergency came up.”

A “I uhh, y’know… Gotta go feed my pet roomba.”

“I powerwalk to the exit, his chilling voice freezes me when I grab the doorknob.”

FangDad “Hold it.”

A “...”

FangDad “Roomba?”

A “That’s my dog’s name, yes.”

“It is an absolute blessing that I’m facing the door.”

“Cold sweat is pouring down my face, threatening to drip off my forehead.”

“If it wasn’t for my suit jacket he would definitely see the spreading patches around my armpits.”

FangDad “...”

A “...”

FangDad “...”

A “...”

FangDad “...Sorry to keep you then. Safe trip home.”

A “Thanksyoutoobye.”

“The door slams behind me and I make record time out of the block.”

“My calves are on fire but I only care about getting as far away as possible.”

“Fang is sitting on the bench by the bus stop.”

“They jump when they see me.”

F “Jeez, anon, you look terrible!”

A “*huff* yeah... I *huff*... don’t feel great…”

“I take a moment to catch my breath.”

A “...Don’t put me that close to death again, please.”

F “Sorry, I forgot…”

F “I hate him so much sometimes…”

F “You gonna be okay?”

A “Yeah, I’m fine.”

A “Are we taking the bus to the beach?”

F “I’ve called up a taxi.”

F “It’ll be here any minute.”

“I notice they’ve got a backpack with them.”

A “The beer in there?”

F “Loads. Also some fireworks.”

A “Rad.”

“I sit next to Fang on the bench to wait.”

“-Three Minutes and Twenty-Seven Seconds Later-”

-- “Muffled Eurobeat came from around the corner, rapidly increasing in volume as a familiar vehicle screeched sideways around the bend.”

“The Taxi comes barreling down the street, drifting into a turn and coming to a graceful stop in front of Fang and I.”

“The window rolls down.”

“It’s the same driver from before.”

-- “It’s almost like he’s the only fuckin’ taxi driver around here.”

Driver “Yep. Still got it.”

“The driver turns his head and looks over at us.”

Driver “Ay, it’s my favorite couple again! How’s the leg, skinnie?”

“The driver chuckles at his own remark.”

“I briefly consider calling a different cab, but decide to give him the benefit of the doubt.”

A “It’s fine now, thanks for asking.”

“I open the door for Fang and we both climb in the back.”

Driver “Where am I takin’ you?”

F “Take us to the beach.”

Driver “Sounds romantic, anywhere in particular you got in mind?”

“I throw a look at Fang, not really having anywhere in mind.”

A “Just anywhere I guess.”

-- Driver “Ok, Brazil it is.”

-- “Oh no oh God oh fuck. Anywhere but Brazil.”

Driver “I think I know just the spot.”

Driver “ And it’s the scenic route too, so it works out for everyone!”

“He peels out from the school to whichever beach he’s taking us.”

“Fang locks their hand in my own and rests her head on my shoulder during the silent drive.”

--”The air freshener does it’s job and hides the smell of burnt tire rubber and my Gamer™ B.O.”

“In the rear-view mirror, the driver makes eye contact with me.”

“The bottom of his eye curls, and I know exactly what he’s thinking.”

“His hand darts to the radio knob.”

A “Don-”

“The way I dance with youuuu~”

-- “Never gonna run around, and desert you~~”

“Fang throws their head back in disgust.”

F “UUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUGGGGGHHHHHHH.”

F “Man, you hate getting tips, don’t you?”

Driver “I get something much better, take my word for it.”

“Two songs and thirty ran red lights later we reach wherever it was he took us.”

Driver “Here we are, best point at the beach.”

Driver “Twenty-seven bucks and eighty cents.”

“I pay the toll in crumpled fives, ones, and exact change.”

Driver “Oh yeah. Skin Row, that’s right.”

Driver “Anywho, have fun, you two!”

-- Driver “And remember, sand and rubbers are not a good combination unless you like surprises 9 months in the making.”

-- Driver “I found that out the hard way.”

“We climb out the back of the cab and the driver gives me a wink before the taxi screeches away in a cloud of sand and carbon monoxide.”

“We have to be the only two who ever ride in that thing.”

“Now it’s just us. Alone.”

-- “On a beach somewhere in Brazil.”

“I take Fang by the hand and we make our way down to the beach.”

“There isn’t a single other person in sight. Perfect.”

“...”

“I have no clue what the fuck I’m doing right now.”

F “How about we find a spot to sit then?”

A “Y-yeah. Sounds like a plan.”

“The waves have receded far back, letting us walk along the soft sand more easily.”

“After some time we find some kind of hidden shoal, only now revealed thanks to low tide.”

F “This looks like a good place.”

“Fang drops the backpack in the sand and promptly unzips it, retrieving two beer cans from inside.”

“I take one from their extended hand and pull the tab open.”

F “To all those fucking losers who went to prom.”

“I take a sip and my face immediately contorts. It’s been a while since I’ve drank this shit.”

“Meanwhile Fang chugs half of their can and laughs at me.”

F “Come on, Anon, don’t tell me you’re a lightweight.”

“Fang wants to go? Let’s go.”

A “No, fuck you!”

“I grab a fresh can and ram my pocket knife in the bottom, raising the hole to my mouth as I pull the tab.”

-- “I immediately regret my decision as the AIDS coating the knife infects me and dissolves me from the inside.”

-- “I fall to the ground and die instantly.”

-- A “With my dying breath, I curse Brazil…”

F “Woohoo!”

“I finish the can and look up to see that Fang now has a firework in their hand.”

“They plant it a few feet away and light the fuse way too close to the base.”

“It zips off seconds later and explodes in a red burst after a few moments.”

A “Oh hell yeah! This is way better than prom!”

A “Whaddya think they’re doing there anyways?”

-- A “Bippity boopity ya fuckin’ lunatic I’m Italian now!”

F “Pffft, who cares?”

F “Naomi got her stupid crown and is probably sucking Naser’s dick in the locker room or something.”

“That’s… specific.”

“Fang sighs as I take another can from their bag and crack it open.”

F “Y’know, Trish had this big idea when we started VVURM DRAMA.”

“Fang sits down in the sand and I feel obligated to take a seat next to them, suffering the moist sand seeping into my clothes.”

F “We were gonna play a show at prom and everyone was gonna love us and it was gonna be our ‘big break’ like she always said.”

F “Now… fuuuck. Now Trish went and did all that to you and now none of that’s happening.”

A “Eh, fuck her.”

-- F “You know, I actually did.”

F “You know, part of me thought you two would just hatefuck and be done with it.”

“...”

A “I er… that’s not happening.”

“I finish the beer and toss the can into the sand.”

-- “I scream like a gorilla”

“Better keep this party going.”

F “I just wish everything could go back to the way it was before all that bullshit.”

“Fang takes a sip from her can as I grab another.”

A “Ha, you shaid it.”

F “Pffft, are you already drunk? Looks like you are a lightweight after all.”

A “It’sh all a bunch of bullshit. Shkool is bullshit and promf is bullshit and err’thang is bullshit --awesome.”

A “Not you though, you- you- you’re not bullshit.”

A “Err’thin was great ’til fuckin’ Trish done did me dirty and turned it into Rock Bottom two point oh.”

A “I ackshually had frens ’n life ‘n shit.”

A “’n not come off as a fuckin’ retard for once.”

A “Fuck Trish n’ fuck Naomi too.”

F “Yeah, fuck that bitch Naomi.”

“Fang downs the rest of her can and reaches for another.”

A “Yeah, fuck that bitch.”

F “Controlling freak, probably does Naser’s homework.”

“I bring my can up for another swig but it’s empty.”

“Fuckin’ bitch. Even stealin’ my booze.”

“I reach my hand… two hands… four hands?”

“I reach into the bag and find more liquid sustenance and pop the top and chug it all at once.”

A “Fuck her stupid fuckin’ plans n’ try’na fix people.”

F “Ha! Now you’re wasted!”

“The fuck I am.”

“I bring my can up for another swig but it’s empty again.”

“How does that pink bitch keep doing it?!”

“Always puttin’ her nose into everythin’. ‘How’s Fang, Anon?’ ‘What have youshand Fang been up to?’”

“Whatta bitch.”

F “That pampered princess. Always acting like she’s right. And how she’s got Naser just… wound up around her stupid finger.”

“Yeah. Poor fuckin’ Naser. Even if his head looks like a perfect circle.”

F “Hah!”

“Why is she laughing?”

“Meh. Musta thought somethin’ funneh.”

A “Yeah, poor Naser.”

“How the fuck did he even hook up with her ‘nyways?”

A “He’s soo worried about everyone, I always see him fretting about you.”

A “You wouldn’t believe how much that pisses Naomi off.”

“I can just imagine her now.”

A “‘Nooo stop paying attention to Fang, waaaah’.”

“The fuck’s her deal anyway… tryna ‘fix’ Fang…”

“Like… s’not her shit to fix…”

“S’not mine either…”

F “Fix?”

“Hm?”

A “Y’say somethin’?”

F “You said Naomi was trying to ‘Fix’ me?”

A “Fuuuuuuuuck…”

A “Well, uhhh…”

A “Y’know what, we’ve been together long enough…”

A “You promise not to kill me?”

F “I… what? Sure.”

A “So Naomi right, she’s buggin’ me constantly when I first got here about dumb stuff.”

F “As she does, yes.”

A “Yeah, yeah. You fuckin’ hate her and she fuckin’ hates you and all, and she uhhhhh…”

A “She got me to start dating you, she thought I was some super cool magic guy that would make you normal or whatever.”

F “Wait… Naomi put you up to dating me?”

A “She tried, yeah…”

A “Somethin’ about wanting all of Naser’s attention because he thinks you’re a screwup.”

A “Shows what she knows, right?”

A “Probably couldn’t fix you if I tried.”

“Fang’s eyebrows furrow.”

F “You think I need fixing?”

A “I mean, no more than anyone else.”

A “Everyone’s got their problems, y’know?”

A “Like me, I’m too nice to people. Too nice.”

A “And you do that weird thing with the pronouns for attention.”

F “A-a-attention?!?”

A “We just gotta live with our faults sometimes, yeah?”

A “You can trust me, I know about this sorta thing…”

“Pain blossoms across my cheek.”

“Fang cradles her palm.”

“If it feels anything like my face right now she’s gotta be hurting.”

F “What the fuck is wrong with you?”

F “How could you say this is for attention!”

F “What attention? You know this is who I am!”

A “What, a girl with daddy issues?”

F “Y-y-you know I’m not a girl!”

A “You sure are fuckin’ acting like one…”

“Fang visibly pales.”

“Her eyes harden.”

F “Did you ever care about me or were you just ‘fixing’ everything Naomi didn’t like?”

F “Like the fucking tool that you are.”

A “You serious? The way you’re going it seems anyone cares more about you than you!”

F “I can’t believe I ever thought you were better than any of the other fuckheads at school!”

F “That I ever opened up to you thinking this time would be different!”

F “...That I actually stuck up for you and broke off with my friends!”

F “But you’re still the same bigoted dumbass as the day I met you.”

A “You should be glad I’ve put up with your shit as long as I have, I deserve a fuckin’ prize or something.”

A “Not like anyone else would put up with a mentally ill schizo like you.”

F “Mentally ill?!”

F “I AM NON BINARY.”

A “YOU DON’T EVEN MAKE A PASSABLE FAGGOT.”

F “SHUT UP!”

“I try to step closer.”

“Her palms thrust roughly into my chest.”

“The momentum from her shove and the soft footing beneath me send me sprawling back.”

“I splash into the shallow water, the stinging salt burning my eyes.”

“From my resting spot in the shallows I see Fang’s silhouette shrink into the distance.”

“I sit up, rising out of the pool of ocean water to see her halfway up the beach.”

“She stops for a moment and turns back.”

F “Anon…”

“I can barely make out her voice from so far away.”

F “Trish was right about you.”

“Her wings shift, hiding her completely as she slips away into the night.”

“I lean back, resubmerging into the black sea water.”

“The pain, from my cheek, and in my eyes, brings sobriety and clarity to what I’ve just done.”

“Her parting words echo in my head and I can’t help but agree after I realize just what exactly happened.”

-- A “Ah, what the hell? Looks like someone can’t take a joke.”

-- “I raise an empty beer can and hit it a couple of times with my pocket knife as if it were a bell.”

-- A “Attention, attention please. I have an announcement I would like to make.”

-- A “FUCK TRISH!”

-- A “FUCK TRIGGERS!”

-- A “FUCK NAOMI!”

-- A “STAY IN SCHOOL, AND SMOKE CRACK!”

-- A “That’s it from me, I’m out! Peace!”

“Surrounded by the salty air and soft waves, the alcohol finally gets to me and I drift out of consciousness.”

“...”

9c (fang and anon go to beach)
Fang comes downstairs in a more girly, conservative dress. Anon compliments her dress, and she giggles. Naomi starts talking with Fang, seemingly getting along well. Naser finds this development strange. (Naomi gives her last keikaiku face

here.)

At the dance, Anon and Fang are slow dancing. Anon is doing poorly, and Fang doesn't mind, just clinging to him tightly throughout the dance. Principal Spears gets onstage, announcing Naomi and Naser the Prom King and Queen. Anon and Fang aren't bothered, instead leaving for the beach. They lie down in the sand, and Anon takes out some old n-zappers from his bag, giving one to Fang. They shoot the stars for a while, bragging about who won more, before eventually becoming silent. Fang gives one last confession, thanking Anon for 'saving' her. They hold hands in the sand.

“Lucy comes downstairs in a white dress.”

“The back of the dress trails down the stairs behind her.”

“Can’t say I’d imagined she’d ever willingly wear one of these.”

A “Yeah, been here a while.”

A “Your dress looks great, Lucy.”

FangMom “Oh, doesn’t it?”

FangMom “When I got the school’s email, I knew right away that the precious little getup I saw shopping the day before would be just perfect, and I even got Nasers’ outfit while I was at it!”

Nas “I would have been fine just going in church clothes, for the record.”

FangMom “Oh, hush. The two of you look just like your Father and I when we met at a school dance!”

“We all look at Nasers’ rather colorful getup for a moment.”

“It was somehow still less loud than his usual jacket.”

A “Come again?”

FangMom “Oh yes, I remember it fondly. Right dear?”

“Lucy’s father hasn’t moved from his seat.”

FangDad “I don’t know. Do I?”

FangMom “Oh yes, I remember you in that snazzy -- banana yellow zoot suit.”

FangMom “You saw me by the punchbowl, strode right up, and offered a dance-”

F “Mom, stooop!”

“I’m trying to create the mental image.”

“Nope, can’t do it.”

“That look her Dad is giving me…”

“It’s saying ‘You’ll be upgraded to a putter if you never speak of this to anyone.’”

“I can see where Fang gets her temper from now.”

“Fine by me.”

FangMom “Awww. But Lucy, you look so precious in that dress.”

FangMom “Oh! We need more pictures!”

“The tiny pterosaur tries to push Lucy next to her father, fighting with the duo to pose properly.”

“I glance at Naser, who seemingly resigns himself to countless more photos.”

A “Uhh… I think we’re going to be late if you take any more pictures.”

“Both Lucy and Naser nod in agreement to that.”

FangMom “Oh, just a couple pictures! You’ll be able to show these when your own children are going to prom!”

-- “>kids, lmao”

“An image flashes in my mind of me and Fang as parents. -- of horrible, misshapen failed hybrids screaming in pain, blaming my selfishness for their unrequested failure at life.”

“A bit early to think of something like that.”

“Wait why is Lucy blushing and glaring at-”

“Oh god fucking damn it.”

“I feel a tug on my arm and spin around to Naomi giving me a look of…”

-- “shit-eating smugness.”

“Approval? Happiness? I can never actually tell when it comes to her.”

N “I’ve never seen her look so happy before! This last month we’ve even had girl-talk!”

N “You’ve really outdone yourself, Anon!”

A “What are you talking about?”

“Naomi fixes me with a knowing look.”

N “Fang. Well, she goes by Lucy now, doesn’t she?”

N “All because you did such a good job fixing her.”

N “She used to be so angry all the time, --it was only a matter of time before something set her off :^) all she needed was just a little push from someone who actually cared about her.”

N “It’s like she’s a whole new person.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“I guess she has been acting… different these past few weeks.”

“First the bracelet and her name.”

“That time she actually went to a horn salon.”

“The fact that she’s wearing a dress right now.”

“Just seeming a bit more…”

“Girly?”

N “And Lucy owes it all to you, Anon.”

A “The only thing I’ve ‘done’ is support her. I didn’t do it for you or your stupid plan.”

A “I just want to have a good prom with Lucy without any more bullshit.”

“Naomi gives me that smug as hell smile that I hate.”

N “Of course! You two deserve it after everything you’ve done.”

“Suddenly I feel another tug on my arm, this time Fang’s mom dragging me back into the middle of the room.”

FangMom “Oh Anon, I never got any pictures of you and Lucy yet!”

“Oh please god no more pictures.”

A “Fine but we really should get going if we want to-”

FangMom “Just a couple! I can even send these ones to your parents, I bet they’re just as proud of you as we are of Lucy and Naser!”

“I’m sure they’re just as surprised as I am that I’m actually going to prom.”

“Posing with Lucy is nice, but I make sure to be extra careful where my arms go in front of her dad.”

“Ten photos later I can tell she is getting just as antsy as I am.”

F “Mooooom, can we finally go yet?”

FangMom “These photos need to have a special album all their own. Honey! We need another photo album!”

F “MOM!”

FangMom “Oh fine, make sure to have fun at prom!”

“I glance over and Lucy’s dad catches me dead in the eyes.”

FangDad “Home by midnight.”

“I only manage a weak nod as Lucy rushes me towards the door.”

“...”

“The ride in the NasCar is awkward and uneventful.”

“Naser doesn’t chuck his jacket to the backseat as a divider, so Lucy and I get to sit next to each other this time around.”

Nas “I heard that Spears might be giving a little musical number tonight.”

N “Naser, stop spreading rumors from the junior class.”

A “So that was just a rumor? Damn.”

Nas “What, you want to hear him sing some opera?”

A “I’d certainly pay to see him try.”

F “Good lord, no. My ears take enough abuse from him during the school day.”

Nas “He won’t be singing, but we did get Reed to be a DJ for the night.”

Nas “His only condition was that he got to wear that mascot costume, which is rather odd, but whatever.”

“Everyone aside from Naser involuntarily sighs.”

Nas “What?”

Nas “Did I say something silly?”

“...”

“Pulling into the school’s parking lot by the gym, I take in the view.”

“The students strung up various strings of lights along the overgrowths of vines around the school.”

“A rather impressive mural of King Rex is spray painted on the wall outside by the ticket booth.”

“You could tell it was rather recent by how there was smoke leaking out of the eyes and mouth.”

“I think about getting a picture with Lucy by it, but I think I’ve developed a serious case of photophobia.”

“The line to get in isn’t too long, and it only takes a few minutes to get inside.”

“Inside is about as well decorated as outside.”

“More lights hang from the greenery and even the ceiling.”

“Those nerdy little chinese lanterns are strung about from wall to wall.”

N “Oh! Oh! They go with my dress!”

“Wow, it’s almost like the person who planned the entire event has insider information on the decor? Color me surprised.”

F “Mumbling.”

“Fuck.”

Nas “I think I’ll hit up the catering first.”

Nas “What about you guys?”

A “I’ll pass, I can’t afford any fancy food.”

F “What?”

N “What?”

A “What?”

-- Sp “AND THAT’S THE BOTTOM LINE!”

Nas “The price of the food is included in the tickets, man.”

Nas “How poor are you?”

A “I live in Skin Row.”

Nas “Sorry, forget I asked.”

“The thought of being able to eat like an actual human for once already pushed Naser’s apology out of my mind.”

A “In that case, I’ll go get food for both me and Lucy.”

A “Waddaya want?”

F “Uhh, get me the closest thing they have to barbecue.”

-- A “Got you covered.”

-- “I slap down a bottle of barbeque sauce in front of her.”

N “Oh, Naser if you’re getting food too, could you get me a plate of kappamaki.”

“Wrong country.”

“Naser slugs me on the shoulder.”

A “Ow.”

Nas “Looks like we’re playing waiters for a bit.”

A “Seems that way.”

“I follow him to the food table.”

“I don’t even recognize most of these dishes.”

“The whole thing is divided into food for carnivores and herbivores.”

“On one end, various cuts of meat lay sizzling on a large griddle and prepared in a myriad of ways on large plates for people to grab with tongs.”

“I get a heaping plate of seven or eight different dishes for Fang, and pick out a steak for myself, grabbing a few nice looking sandwiches from the other end of the table.”

“Wait, I have to get drinks, too.”

“Crap, my hands are already full.”

Nas “You got everything?”

A “Don’t got drinks.”

Nas “We can always do a return trip.”

A “I guess.”

A “Hey, is this what Lucy would want?”

Nas “Honestly man, you could probably get her to eat a rock if you told her it came from a cow.”

A “I see.”

“Naser starts heading back to where we left the other two.”

“He suddenly stops halfway through and I have to catch myself from dropping the plates.”

A “What’s wrong?”

“Naser gestures forward.”

“Naomi and Lucy are sitting at a table on the other side of the room, laughing and chatting with each other.”

“The legendary ‘Girl Talk’.”

A “What the-”

Nas “Did you put something in her punch?”

A “They haven’t had any, remember?”

Nas “I don’t know how else to explain this!”

A “And you think I do?”

Nas “I dunno, go up and ask them or something!”

A “I’m not gonna go interrupt girl talk, are you crazy!”

Nas “It has to be one of us, doesn’t it?”

A “Why can’t it be both?”

Nas “The food’s getting cold.”

A “Then why are we arguing-”

F “What are you dorks standing there for?”

N “Hurry on over!”

“Naomi waves for us to come over.”

“One return trip to get sodas and punch later and we can all start eating.”

“Lucy delicately cuts her portions apart and deliberately spears the tiny pieces on her fork before chewing them to bits.”

“I was really expecting another impromptu sea world dolphin show, but then again that’d make one hell of a scene.”

“But then there’s the loving couple sitting across from us.”

“Trying to sit there as Naomi teasingly offers Naser her food on the end of her fork is so saccharine sweet that I feel myself slowly morph into Wilford Brimley.”

“Bewildered at the gut-wrenchingly sweet theatrics, I try to focus on my own food.”

“Thing about party sandwiches is that they look great, but usually just taste bland.”

“Shame.”

“One of them at least has bacon in it.”

“I’m already getting full though.”

A “Hey, Lucy, you want the rest of my-”

“She’s playing with her fork, deep in contemplation with a little blush.”

A “What’s on your mind?”

F “I was wondering… if you would like to try my chili pepper gyoza?”

A “S-sure!”

“She smiles as she gently pops the little morsel into my mouth.”

“One crunchy bite and I immediately regret my decision.”

“Like TyrannoSatan’s molten piss combined with fissile material.”

“But Lucy’s watching.”

“So I force myself to chew more on the magma flavored pot sticker.”

“I will not let this wildfire contained in flour ruin the moment.”

“Lucy must see me sweating because she pulls her fork back immediately.”

F “Oh no, oh crap, sorry! I forgot humans can’t handle spices!”

--A “Milkies! Mommy’s milkies please!”

“The punch cup is quickly drained.”

A “Don’t worry about it…”

A “I need to go get more…”

A “Holy crap, why isn’t there a label for that stuff?”

“Several drinks of punch and cola later, I return to my seat.”

Nas “Where’d you go, man?”

Nas “We’re all finished eating, ready to hit the dance floor?”

A “Don’t worry about it, I just tried some of the meat with orange spices and…”

N “OH! Oops, sorry, Anon.”

N “Man, it must suck not being able to eat good spicy food.”

“‘It must suck merflaflf’”

F “You’re mumbling again.”

“I let out my frustration in a slow sigh.”

“No, none of that tonight.”

“I see more and more couples moving to the dance floor.”

“Lucy notices too, her eyes lingering on them as the couples pass us by.”

“Hmmm.”

A “Soooo…”

“She turns back to me and the anticipation in her eyes makes me feel more nervous.”

A “I know I said I can’t dance.”

A “And I mean, I REALLY can’t dance.”

A “Like, quadraplegic with down syndrome can’t dance.”

A “But-”

F “Yes! I’ve been waiting since forever!”

“Her hand clasps mine, and Lucy doesn’t seem bothered at all with how moist my palms are.”

“We move to the dance floor hand in hand until we manage to find an open space.”

A “Right, okay. Like this?”

“Right hand on her hip I think.”

“I try to take her right hand with my left, but Lucy shakes her head.”

“Both of her arms wrap loosely around my neck.”

“Lucy’s body is pressed against mine. I can feel the contours of her frame through her surprisingly thin dress.”

“Oh hey, those alarms aren’t broken.”

“My left hand lands on her hip too and now I can’t stop thinking about how Lucy molds against my body near perfectly.”

F “J-just follow my lead, okay? Mom gave me some lessons.”

“I nod stiffly.”

“Lucy mutters a one-two count before taking a left step back.”

“My right foot follows and lands on her toes.”

F “OW!”

A “Sorry!”

F “Nonono. Don’t worry.”

F “Just uh… slowly, okay?”

A “Y-yeah, okay.”

“Lucy repeats the step back. I step forward and manage somehow.”

“She then steps to the side and I try to follow.”

“Our awkward steps continue like this.”

“A couple successful steps and then I ruin it with a heavy step on her dainty

toes.”

“But slowly those failures are less and less common.”

“By the third song Lucy and I are finally managing a basic waltz.”

“As the night goes on, the dance becomes more natural.”

“In the light of the various strobes I’m able to relish the moment being this close, face to face.”

“Whenever one of the lights passes directly through her eyes they glow with the luster of cut amber, and her diamond pupils soften.”

“The last song ends, and Spears walks onto the temporary stage.”

“The students cover their ears again, and Spears rolls his eyes before taking the microphone.”

Sp “Thank you all very much for attending prom this year, we have just one last event for the night, followed by a few more songs.”

Sp “Everyone gave their votes, and I’m here to announce the annual prom King and Queen.”

“The principal pulls a tiny gold sheaf envelope from his lapel and holds it up for the audience to gawk at.”

Sp “to announce prom King and Queen.”

“Well this is a foregone conclusion.”

“A few students are already congratulating Naser as he’s led by the arm by his handler.”

Sp “A drum roll, please.”

“Reed steps onto the stage with a small block in his arms.”

“He smiles and nods, pressing one of the myriad of buttons on the block.”

“A mediocre recording of the drumline plays over the speakers as Spears clears his

throat and tears open the envelope.”

Sp “And your winners.”

Sp “For the one Mil.”

Sp “Twenty-twenty class.”

Sp “Aaaaaare….”

Sp “Naaaaaser aaaaand Naaaaoooomiiiiii!”

“He tosses the paper over his shoulder and yanks out the crowns from a pocket inside his jacket.”

“Spears backs out of the spotlight, giving a polite applause to the pair as they rush onstage to accept.”

“The rest of the class is in a celebratory uproar.”

“Spears offers the crowns to Naomi, who puts the larger one on Naser’s crest to droop off, and then dons the tiara..”

“The whole moment is picturesque, just like Naomi wanted.”

N “Thank you all so much, Volcano High!”

N “This is such an honor to receive.”

N “My, I don’t really have a speech prepared. But…”

“In the same way she didn’t prepare the catering and decor, I’m certain.”

N “In just one short year, we-”

Sp “Alright, alright, let’s stay on schedule.”

Sp “I promised your parents we’d be out of here by ten.”

Sp “We have time for just a few more songs, so everyone can get the jitterbugs out of their systems.”

“Reed shuffles to his spot behind the DJ table and starts another slow song.”

“Lucy tugs at my arm.”

F “I’m getting pretty exhausted, actually.”

A “Do you want to go kick it outside for a bit, away from the action?”

“She nods, and I lead the way, holding her hand while I cross the ocean of sweaty saurian seniors.”

“The night air outside offers a cool breeze, I didn’t even notice how humid it was in there.”

“The two of us sit on the curb for a while.”

A “You been having fun so far?”

F “Tonight’s been great.”

A “Yeah, it was. The food was amazing, especially the steak.”

F “I thought the steak was alright. I know you just loved the gyoza.”

A “Har.”

“I lean back and make a show of cracking my spine against the pavement.”

F “Impressive.”

A “Yeah, you can do this on the school chairs, too.”

A “...You plan on going back in?”

F “I think i’ve been around people enough tonight.”

F “I’d rather stay out here. Just the two of us.”

“Damn you Bill Withers. Damn you and your musical talent.”

A “It’ll only be a few minutes before everyone gets out anyways, you sure?”

F “I’m sure.”

“She leans back next to me and takes my hand on the pavement.”

F “I don’t think the night could get much better.”

A “I could think of one or two things.”

F “Like what?”

A “Ffffuck.”

A “Since everyone’s here and about to be dead tired, that means the beach will be completely empty.”

F “Ohh!”

F “That’s a great idea!”

A “Or we could head to my place and play some Rock Ring 2.”

F “I’ll pick door number one.”

A “I’ll phone the taxi.”

F “Will it get here before everyone else gets out?”

A “Something tells me otherwise.”

“-Three Minutes and Twenty-Seven Seconds Later-”

-- “Muffled Eurobeat came from around the corner, rapidly increasing in volume as a familiar vehicle screeched sideways around the bend.”

“The Taxi comes barreling down the street, drifting into a turn and coming to a graceful stop in front of Lucy and I.”

“The window rolls down.”

“It’s the same driver from before.”

-- “It’s almost like he’s the only fuckin’ taxi driver around here.”

Driver “Yep. Still got it.”

“The driver turns his head and looks over at us.”

Driver “Ay, it’s my favorite couple again! How’s the leg, skinnie?”

“The driver chuckles at his own remark.”

“I briefly consider calling a different cab, but decide to give him the benefit of the doubt.”

A “It’s fine now, thanks for asking.”

“I open the door for Lucy and we both climb in the back.”

Driver “Sooo, looks like prom night, huh? You kids clocking out early?”

F “Actually we’re heading for the beach.”

Driver “Sounds romantic, anywhere in particular you got in mind?”

“I throw a look at Lucy, not really having anywhere in mind.”

A “Just anywhere I guess.”

-- Driver “Ok, Brazil it is.”

-- “Oh no oh God oh fuck. Anywhere but Brazil.”

Driver “I think I know just the spot.”

Driver “ And it’s the scenic route too, so it works out for everyone!”

“He peels out from the school to whichever beach he’s taking us.”

“Lucy locks her hand in my own and rests her head on my shoulder during the silent drive.”

--”The air freshener does it’s job and hides the smell of burnt tire rubber and my Gamer™ B.O.”

“In the rear-view mirror, the driver makes eye contact with me.”

“The bottom of his eye curls, and I know exactly what he’s thinking.”

“His hand darts to the radio knob.”

A “Don-”

“The way I dance with youuuu~”

-- “Never gonna run around, and desert you~~”

“A defeated sigh escapes me. The exact kind of music Lucy hates.”

“I mentally prepare myself for her yelling at the driver to turn the radio off.”

“But instead she snuggles a bit closer and begins… humming along?”

“Maybe she really is tired. We danced for hours.”

“The driver looks aside in disappointment.”

“I guess that’s two of us surprised by that.”

“Two songs and thirty ran red lights later we reach wherever it was he took us.”

“I reach for my wallet to pay the toll and the driver just gives me a wave.”

Driver “Y’know what? It’s on the house this time, kids.”

Driver “Just have fun, you two.”

-- Driver “And remember, sand and rubbers are not a good combination unless you like surprises 9 months in the making.”

-- Driver “I found that out the hard way.”

“We climb out the back of the cab and the driver gives me a wink before the taxi screeches away in a cloud of sand and carbon monoxide.”

“We have to be the only two who ever ride in that thing.”

“Just us. Alone.”

-- “On a beach somewhere in Brazil.”

“...”

“I have no clue what the fuck I’m doing right now.”

F “How about we find a spot to sit then?”

A “Y-yeah. Sounds like a plan.”

“Lucy intertwines her fingers with mine and leads me to the water’s edge.”

“The waves have receded far back, letting us walk along the soft sand more easily.”

“I’m caught between looking out at the horizon where the water and sky seem to connect.”

“And at Lucy as she once again lays her head on my shoulder.”

“And honestly, Lucy is the far better sight to see.”

“After some time we find some kind of hidden shoal, only now revealed thanks to low tide.”

“Must be Raptor Jesus’ gift to us.”

“I take off my jacket and place it on the moist sand for Lucy as a seat.”

A “Your chair, m’dino.”

-- F “What a faggot lmao.”

“She sniffs away a giggle and daintily sits atop it.”

“I suffer the moisture seeping into my --jorts pants just to sit beside her.”

“Even now our hands are still locked together, and I can’t stop the smile that spreads across my face.”

-- “I feel like an absolute degenerate, like I have just violated every rule about propriety and decorum known to all cultures across time.”

“The two of us take in the moment, just enjoying each others’ silent company.”

“The salty air.”

“The calm waves.”

“The waxing moon, not quite full but still casting a silver vignette onto the sleepy town.”

-- “THE RAGING BONER THREATENING TO RIP THROUGH MY SLACKS.”

F “Oh! Look!”

“Fang points to the sky at a shooting star.”

A “Well hey, you got a wish?”

F “That’s not a shooting star, dork.”

A “It isn’t?”

-- F “That’s the meteor which would have killed us all in a parallel universe, you know, in case you fucked up with playing this game you fat loser.”

“I look again.”

“The star is joined by several smaller dots trailing behind, in the sky for only an instant before disappearing over the other horizon.”

A “Whoa, a meteor shower.”

-- “I notice that one of the bright spots didn’t streak off into the night, and it was steadily growing larger and larger.”

“Lucy lays down on her back to get a better view.”

“A little sand in my suit’s worth the moment.”

“Man, being here with Lucy, after such a wonderful night…”

“I feel like no matter what, everything’s going to be just fine.”

F “...I feel the same.”

“I’m just going to start biting my tongue.”

F “Thank you for being here with me, Anon.”

A “I mean… I did ask you to prom, right?”

F “No, you big dweeb… I mean…”

F “You’ve always been there for me even when I was so mean to you.”

F “I don’t know what kind of road I was going down when you met me, but…”

F “But I know it wasn’t a good place to be. I don’t know where I was going to end up if I never found you.”

F “You saved me, Anon. And I’ll always be grateful for that.”

-- A “That’s fucking gay, bro.”

“She sits up and looks down to me with that warm smile of hers.”

“Hearing her put it that way…”

“Maybe I did ‘fix’ Lucy after all.”

“She seems so happy with how things are, it doesn’t matter if it was all part of someone’s stupid plan.”

“Lucy’s fingers dance across my cheek.”

“Slowly, slowly, ever so slowly.”

“Her eyes lid as she leans forward, her head tilting and her mouth opening slowly.”

“It’s taken a month for us to figure this out, but now that we’ve had practice…”

“I raise myself up, my own mouth meeting her’s in a slow and soft connection.”

“Her tongue slides along mine and this time she manages not to gag me with it.”

“Our first through fourteen kisses never went this smoothly.”

“And it’s utter bliss as we savor each other’s lips -- esophagii.”

“And while I would stay like this forever if I could.”

“Air is very much a necessity for life.”

“We separate just as slowly as when we connected.”

“Lucy’s eyes open as she smiles impishly at me.”

F “I love you.”

“Yeah. Me too.”

“She giggles and lays down. Her head resting on my shoulder and her wing becoming a blanket as we look back to the stars.”

“We stay laying a while longer, keeping the moon company.”

-- “This totally beats staying at home and playing XRox.”

“...”

“Wait.”

-- “I sensed a disturbance in the force.”

“What time is it?”

9d (fang plays well, naomi is furious fang is taking attention from her. then talks to anon in private to break up/take a break while she thinks about her life.)
Fang comes downstairs in an elegant dress and a guitar case. Anon offers to help carry the guitar. Naomi pulls Anon aside to berate him for not ‘fixing’ Fang the way she wanted, and Fang walks in on the conversation. Fang tells Naomi she doesn’t care about her plan and leaves with a slap. Anon and Fang take a taxi to Prom.

After a few dances, Fang goes to tell Spears she's all set for playing the guitar. Meanwhile, Anon asks Trish for a friendly dance, and Naomi and Naser show up to

chat as well. Anon doesn't give Naomi the time of day, but she doesn't care since she knows she's winning Prom. Spears goes onstage to announce Prom King and Queen. He reads out Naomi and Nasers' names and they rush onstage to celebrate. Spears announces that he's asked someone to give a special musical number, having Fang come out onstage with her guitar. She plays and sings excellently, and the crowd is going wild. Naomi is in complete shock the spotlight has been taken away from her. After the song finishes, the crowd is in an uproar, and Anon rushes onstage to kiss Fang. The scene ends with them kissing in the spotlight.

F “Nice suit! Did ya get it from the suit store?”

-- F “Yo Anon, I learned this from Spears!”

-- “Fang leaps off the bannister, dropping rapidly on me elbow first.”

-- “The pain is unimaginable.”

“Fang leans over the railing of the staircase.”

“Holy shit, she can really rock that dress.”

FangDad “Ahem.”

“Ah. Shit.”

F “Daaaad. Stop scaring Anon!”

FangDad “I’ll scare who I want in my home.”

“Fang’s mom saves me, taking the mountainous pterodactyl by his ear.”

FangMom “Now now, dear, Anon is a lovely guest.”

FangMom “Come on down and pose for pictures with everyone, Lucy!”

A “Actually, stay up there so we can all rest.”

F “Har.”

F “Best thing to do is get it over with.”

FangMom “That’s right. Alright everyone, group together, this one’s going on Christmas postcards for sure!”

“Kill me.”

F “Later.”

“The onslaught of flashes continues as the four of us are directed to stand and pose together in every possible combination.”

“After a millenia Fang’s mother is satisfied, or her camera ran out of memory.”

“Naser and Fang both crash onto the couch rubbing their photo-bleached eyes, Even Naomi is holding her eyes closed.”

“The whole thing left me parched.”

A “Hate to bother, but do you guys have any water bottles?”

F “The fridge dispenses water.”

Nas “Cups are in the cabinet closest on the right.”

A “Thanks.”

“While pouring my glass of water Naomi walks in after me.”

A “Oh, you need a cup too? I’ll grab you one.”

N “No thank you.”

N “Actually, Anon, can I speak with you for a moment?”

“Oh boy.”

A “Go ahead.”

N “I’m very happy that you and Fang are together now, but…”

“I take a long, slow sip.”

A “But what?”

N “But, I mean… Just look at her.”

N “The school year’s almost over and she’s barely changed from being that weird punk-goth type.”

-- “Siiiiiiiiiiip. Yep. Rock Ring was a good game.”

“Siiiiip. Aaaaah. Refreshing.”

A “So?”

N “I mean, I thought you would try to make her… Presentable, you know?”

“Mmm, love me some water.”

A “Could you elaborate?”

N “But it’s like you aren’t even trying to fix her.”

“Damn, now I need a refill.”

N “Could you stop that, I’m being serious here.”

A “No no, keep going, I’m listening.”

“A quick top up and I’m good to go.”

N “Well I figured you would help her become more ladylike.”

A “I understand. How does that make you feel?”

N “Well, to be honest, I’d rather Fang not be a problem to me at all.”

N “I’ve tried everything, too, but even getting her a boyfriend doesn’t work.”

N “It’s harsh to ask, but when we go to prom tonight I’d like you two to avoid us.”

N “It’s supposed to be a special night.”

A “I see.”

N “Oh, really? That’s grea-”

A “And how does that make you feel, Fang?”

“Naomi goes white as a sheet.”

F “Well since you’ve asked, Anon, I’d be glad to share.”

N “O-oh, Fang, I d-didn’t see you there.”

F “You’d be surprised how useful staying quiet and stationary can be.”

F “How close you can get to someone without them knowing you’re even there.”

N “I-I see. Very impressive.”

F “Why do you look so surprised? Isn’t me being invisible exactly what you want?”

N “W-well, n-no, I was only planning-”

F “Oh, right! Your ‘plan’!”

F “I’ve known for months now you were up to something retarded, but not what.”

F “But I totally get this, it’s exactly something only you would come up with.”

F “Down to the whole thing crashing and burning.”

F “I mean really, how could you mess this up?”

F “Literally all you had to do was get some poor schmuck and get him to do everything for you.”

F “Hey…”

F “You can’t get even one person to do what you want?”

F “Pretty sad, right Anon?”

A “I could do that in seconds on a certain website.”

F “Man, even Anon can do it better. Huh.”

F “So basically, fuck your stupid plan, fuck your prom crown, and fuck you.”

-- F “You are already dead.”

“In a flash Fang strikes Naomi right across the face.”

F “...And your dress sucks.”

F “Anon, you’ve got the taxi number right? We’re gonna need to leave like, right now.”

A “Yeah, I’ll give him a call.”

A “Bye Naomi, enjoy your hat.”

“We leave a speechless Naomi fuming in the kitchen and head towards the front door.”

“...And are promptly intercepted by Fang’s mother still holding her camera.”

“I guess she found another card for it.”

FangMom “You two look so darling together! We need more photos!”

A “...I think we’re gonna be late if we take any more pictures.”

F “Yeah mom, we need to leave early so I can get everything all set up.”

“And to avoid being anywhere near Naomi.”

“To my surprise, she seemingly relents to Fang this time.”

FangMom “Oh fine, you’ll be happy you have them when your own children are going to prom!”

“An image flashes in my mind of me and Fang as parents.”

“A bit early to think of something like that, and the blush on Fang’s face tells me she’s thinking the same thing.”

F “MOM!”

FangMom “Make sure to have fun at prom, you two!”

“I glance over and Fang’s dad catches me dead in the eyes.”

FangDad “Home by midnight.”

“I manage a nod as Fang grabs my hand and leads me out the door with her guitar in the other.”

A “Let me call the taxi…”

“I dial the number for the taxi service.”

Driver “City taxi service.”

A “Yes, can you come to the bus stop at-”

Driver “Got it.”

“*click*”

F “Did he hang up on you?”

A “I dunno, maybe-”

“The taxi skids around the corner, barreling towards the bus stop.”

“In the last ten feet it slows to a graceful stop in front of us.”

“The window rolls down and it’s the same velociraptor driver from before. Of course it is.”

Driver “Yep. Still got it.”

A “How did you get here so fast?”

Driver “Was in the neighborhood.”

“The driver --sips his can of Monster Energy Ultra turns his head and looks over at us.”

Driver “Ay, it’s my favorite couple again! How’s the leg, skinnie?”

“The driver chuckles at his own remark.”

-- “This snide fucking driver. Holy shit. I wanna beat the shit out of this fucking driver so goddamn much.”

“I briefly consider calling a different cab, but decide to give him the benefit of the doubt.”

A “It’s fine now, thanks for asking.”

“This guy must stake out wherever we go.”

“Aren’t there [i]any[/i] other taxi drivers in this town?”

“I open the door for Fang and we climb in the back, fitting her guitar behind the driver’s seat.”

Driver “So where’re you two lovebirds heading dressed all snazzy like that?”

A “Volcano High, it’s prom night.”

“The driver gives a whistle in response.”

Driver “Prom, huh? Sounds like one romantic night.”

“With that he speeds off away, leaving Fang’s house a shrinking spot in the rear-view mirror.”

“The drive back to school is rather calm, despite the driver going at least thirty miles over the speed limit the whole time.”

“In the rear-view mirror, the driver makes eye contact with me.”

“The bottom of his eye curls, and I know exactly what he’s thinking.”

“His hand darts to the radio knob.”

A “Don-”

“The way I dance with youuuu~”

-- “Never gonna run around, and desert you~~”

“Fang’s heel digs into the back of the driver’s seat, making him yelp.”

Driver “Sheesh, no wonder they call them stilettos.”

“The driver kills the radio, a smug grin of victory spreading across Fang’s face.”

“Eventually the cab pulls up to the school gymnasium, illuminated by the celebratory decorative string lights.”

“I reach for my wallet to pay the toll and the driver just gives me a wave.”

Driver “Y’know what? It’s on the house this time, kids.”

Driver “Just have fun, you two.”

“We climb out the back of the cab and the driver gives me a wink before the taxi screeches away in a cloud of carbon monoxide.”

“I offer to carry Fang’s guitar from here which she gladly accepts.”

“The students strung up various strings of lights along the overgrowths of vines around the school.”

“A rather impressive mural of King Rex is spray painted on the wall outside by the ticket booth.”

“You could tell how recent it was by how there was smoke leaking out of the eyes and mouth.”

“I think about getting a picture with Fang by it, but I think I’ve developed a serious case of photophobia.”

“The line to get in isn’t too long, and it only takes a few minutes to get inside.”

“Inside is about as well decorated as outside.”

“More lights hang from the greenery and even the ceiling.”

“Those nerdy little chinese lanterns are strung about from wall to wall.”

F “Gotta wonder who picked decorations that go perfectly with her dress.”

A “Perks of the job.”

“Fang leads me to the temporary stage on the other side of the gymnasium where a curtain had been set up.”

“Thanks to her guitar lessons I feel like I can actually help get her set up instead of standing around doing nothing.”

“We slip behind the curtain and come face to face with King Rex, smoke billowing out of his mouth.”

Re “...’Sup?”

“Reed must be helping Spears with the sound system.”

F “Oh good, Reed’s here.”

F “You can get everything set up like you usually do so I don’t have to.”

Re “You got it, amigo.”

“With a mock salute, Reed takes the guitar case from my hand and promptly disappears behind one of the speakers.”

“Only to return moments later with the guitar, now with a cable trailing behind him.”

“Damn, he works fast.”

F “Yeah he does, there’s a reason he handles all this sort of stuff.”

“The MUMBLING.”

“Reed dusts off his hands and lets out a sigh, releasing another mushroom cloud of smoke from the costume.”

Re “Man… I haven’t talked to you guys in ages, y’know?”

Re “Not since the whole… projector thing.”

A “...You know I sit two seats away from you in math, why didn’t you just talk to me then?”

Re “Bro, I would but like… don’t wanna leave Trish alone.”

Re “She’s still suuuuper beating herself up over it, don’t wanna isolate her even more, y’know?”

A “Weren’t you going to talk to her about it, Fang?”

F “I’ve… been meaning to, but…”

F “It’s just sort of awkward, you know…”

F “I’ll try talking to her soon, I promise.”

Re “Trish is here… somewhere.”

A “She bought a ticket? Does she even have a date?”

Re “Took advantage of my ‘plus one’ deal for deejaying tonight, dude.”

Re “Don’t think she wanted a dance with King Rex though...”

“Reed’s shoulders slump a bit inside the costume.”

A “I can imagine.”

F “Think everything’s set up now, so we can just enjoy ourselves for the next ninety minutes.”

Re “You guys going out?”

A “Yeah, see you later Reed.”

“He waves his goodbye and turns his attention back to the mix table.”

F “You getting hungry?”

A “Yeah, actually.”

F “I saw there was a pretty big food table on the way in, come on.”

“Despite the selection of food being rather diverse and professional, Fang piles her plate with barbecue.”

“I myself end up with a bit of this and that, bites of sushi, various meats, a few of those tiny party sandwiches, and a few things I don’t recognize but look tasty enough.”

“We sit against the back wall to wolf down our servings, and Fang makes me go back to get her seconds.”

“Eventually she decides the black hole in her esophagus is satisfied.”

F “Man, were these tickets worth every penny or what?”

A “I’m not sure what those things filled with melted cheese were, but they were great.”

-- A “Right, sit tight. I’ll grab some for tomorrow. And the day after. And the day after that.”

-- “I head back to the buffet spread while pulling out a bunch of tupperwares.”

F “Let’s go see what other crap there is to do here.”

A “How much time do we got?”

F “Spears told me I should head back once the slow dances start.”

F “Probably another hour or so.”

F “You know what, speaking of dances, we should go hit up the floor while they’re still playing the good stuff.”

A “What, you don’t like slow dances?”

F “What I like are the bones in my feet.”

A “Wooooooow.”

“Fang takes my hand and leads me into the crowd of dancing teenagers.”

“Reed actually has a pretty good selection of music going.”

“Instead of whatever garbage was in the weekly top-forty list, he’s been playing real music.”

“Fang’s already lost in the music, grooving along with the other students.”

“Now would be a good time to mention I can’t dance in any capacity, not just slow dancing.”

“I can’t just stand here like a sperg, need to think of something fast…”

F “Stop being a dweeb, Anon.”

“When in doubt, improvise.”

“I bob my knees to the fast rhythm of the music.”

“And my hands mimic the reload animations from various first person shooters I’ve actually played.”

“For good measure I spice it up with a couple dragon punch moves from some fightan cabinets.”

“Fang seems glad I’ve joined in, she even tries to mimic a few of my ‘moves’.”

“Then she raises an eyebrow and her smile curls a bit more.”

F “Wait, Anon, are you…?”

F “BAAAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHHAHAHAHAHAAAH!”

A “I’m not sure what you were expecting.”

F “Yeah, no, that’s great, keep doing it.”

F “Holy shit you’re weird.”

“At least I’m not flossing like some of the faggots here.”

“Reed wades through the crowd and grabs Fang’s shoulder from behind.”

F “Yah! What the-”

F “Reed, why aren’t you on stage?”

Re “Autoplay, don’t worry about it.”

Re “Something’s come up, we’re gonna need you a bit early.”

“Fang hesitates.”

F “Damn it, sorry Anon, I don’t mean to leave you like this.”

A “Things happen, go ahead and fix whatever Reed tripped over.”

Re “How did you- nevermind.”

Re “Come on, there’s no time!”

A “Good luck, Fang.”

“Fang gives me a brief hug before following Reed out of the crowd, leaving me alone amongst the sea of sweaty teenagers.”

“...”

“I should go get more of those cheese things from earlier.”

“It’s nice to eat like an actual human for once.”

“On my way over to the catering table something catches the corner of my eye.”

“Sitting alone at a table in the back is Trish, blankly staring at her phone and not touching the plate of food in front of her.”

“I really don't pay any mind to her, my focus solely on getting to the buffet table.”

Re “She’s still suuuuper beating herself up over it, don’t wanna isolate her even more, y’know?”

“God… damn it, Reed.”

“I really don’t feel like playing therapist again, especially at prom.”

“...But if she’s still hung up on what happened then the least I can do is talk to her, right?”

“After getting another plate of tiny greasy delights, I begin to approach Trish.”

“Worse case scenario I get gored on her horn, and it’s not as threatening as staircases.”

A “Is this seat taken?”

“Trish looks up from her phone and her face flies through a myriad of emotions.”

“At first confused, then fucking pissed, then aroused, then back to fucking pissed, all in the space of an attosecond.”

A “Hey… Lookin’ good in that dress.”

T “Y-you too…”

“Okay, operation confused trigga is off to a good start.”

“I hold out the second plate of morsels to her.”

A “I snagged these for Fang, but she had some last minute stage issues to deal with.”

T “O-oh. Uh… Thanks?”

“I sit down next to her and tuck into my meal.”

T “Aren’t you supposed to be with Fang? Why are you here?”

A “Well, she’s got something to deal with and I’m hungry.”

T “No! I mean here!”

A “To… eat?”

“For emphasis I show her my half finished plate.”

T “Oh my fuck, no! As in right here!”

A “Oh!”

A “Because it’s prom-”

“Before her hands can reach for my throat I finish.”

A “And you’re looking lonely.”

“Ah, there we go.”

“Trish locks up completely.”

“Looking closer I can see just how dry her eyes are.”

“Man, she must’ve been crying a lot.”

T “I wasn’t!”

“God damn it mouth.”

A “Alright, alright. I was just thinking.”

A “And like. How do I say this.”

“Trish is focused completely on me now. Okay brain, help me out here.”

A “I saw you sat here. No date, no friends, no nothing.”

“Ah, bad choice, Trish’s face sunk at each word.”

A “I was thinking ’bout how lonely you were.”

A “Which is something I know quite well.”

A “Being alone and all.”

A “So!”

A “Since I’m by myself now, and you were looking lonely, I’d figured we could be lonely together.”

A “Make sense?”

“Trish lets out a sigh.”

T “...Why are you doing this?”

T “After everything I did, you should hate me for it.”

“I sigh.”

A “Yeah… I mean, I still get called names and stuff.”

A “And Stella keeps trying to get me to watch shit with her.”

-- A “Never let her show you Escaflowne.”

A “But fuck it. I won’t have to see those fuckers ever again in a few weeks.”

A “That shit’s gonna be in the past.”

A “But…”

F “I’ve… been meaning to, but…”

A “But it’d crush Fang if she never talks with her best friend again.”

“Trish’s eyes widen.”

A “So. Peace?”

“I hold out the second plate of food to her again.”

“Trish takes the proffered plate. Her dry eyes start to water and a fragile smile grows on her face.”

T “Peace.”

A “Cool. Also speaking of, that food’s probably cool now, too.”

“It’s a bad joke, but it works in getting a simple laugh out of the triceratops girl.”

“I make quick work of the rest of my pot stickers, noting how Trish is ravenously devouring them.”

“Huh, I guess she was looking a little thin. This month must have been hell for her.”

“We sit in silence until the music changes to something much slower.”

“Definitely not my kind of music.”

“I peer over and see Trish staring longingly at the couples dancing.”

“Guess no one’s bothered to ask her.”

T “Reed has.”

A “Then why not dance with him?”

T “I am NOT dancing with King Rex.”

“Poor Reed.”

A “Well, how ‘bout with me?”

T “...Do you even know how to dance?”

A “I can improvise?”

T “Let me rephrase that. Do you even know how to slow dance?”

A “There’s a difference?”

“Trish sighs in frustration.”

T “The things I put up with…”

T “Alright, I’ll teach you.”

A “Wait wha-”

T “I want to dance, and so help me Raptor Jesus I’m getting a dance.”

“Trish grabs me by the elbow and pulls me to the dance floor.”

“When Trish finds a spot she’s satisfied with, away from most of the other couples and open, she turns back to me.”

T “Left hand on my hip. Now!”

“Oh wow, she is short as hell.”

“I need to actually reach so my hand plants itself on her hip.”

A “Okay, next?”

“Trish’s left hand takes my right, and her right hand is placed on my left bicep since she doesn’t want to stand on her toes. Or mine.”

T “Now just step to your left.”

“My left foot moves left.”

T “And bring your right foot next to it.”

“Okay. That’s one step.”

T “And that’s it.”

“...”

“Wow, dancing is simple.”

“Slowly I find myself getting into the rhythm of the dance.”

“Occasionally Trish would give instructions for a new step or move.”

“One song and dance grew into three or four, I lost track.”

“But as we ease into the next song, I realize that Trish is starting to smile at last.”

-- “And then she killed the dog.”

“*GRRRRRRRRRLLLL*”

“Trish’s face goes bright red.”

A “What was that?”

T “Uhh… I think I was hungrier than I thought.”

A “Wanna head back to the food table?”

T “Er- yeah. Sorry.”

A “For what? Come on.”

“I lead Trish out of the crowd back in the general direction of the buffet.”

A “Thanks for teaching me to dance.”

T “I’m coming for you if I hear Fang’s got a broken toe.”

A “Noted. You go ahead, I’ll wait at the bench we were at before.”

“I gesture towards the tables of food.”

T “Oh, sure. Gimme a bit.”

“She heads off and I go sit in the same spot on the bleachers as before.”

“Well then. Got some time to kill, time to shitpo-”

“*THUNK*”

A “Whoa, Trish, warn me before you jump into the chair.”

Sp “My bad.”

A “Oh ffff-flint, hello Principal Spears.”

A “Is Fang doing alright?”

Sp “Yeah, she’s still getting everything ready.”

Sp “I just wanted to have a word with you. Got a minute?”

A “Sure.”

Sp “When you first got here I noticed you were a bit on the egotistical side, if I may say so.”

Sp “You’ve since become a fine young man.”

Sp “You were in a muddy situation and were able to get this much out of it.”

Sp “I can tell you’re going places, son.”

A “I-I see. Thanks.”

“Principal Spears leans over and places one of his gargantuan hands on my shoulder.”

Sp “I’m real proud of you.”

“He pats my shoulder out of its socket and gets up.”

Sp “I won’t keep you any longer, I have my own business to attend to in a moment.”

-- Sp “Here’s some tickets to my next title match. Don’t forget to bet on The Caveman!”

A “Giving Naomi and Naser their crowns?”

Sp “Heh. It’s a bit obvious, but I won’t ruin their moment.”

Sp “Alright, be seeing you.”

A “Later, Principal Spears.”

“He marches away to get ready for the announcement.”

“I check my phone to make my post.”

“hey fagets guess whos at prom? later virgins
pic rel is my date :^)”

“I attach a picture I took of Stella earlier when her date was in the restroom.”

“How did she end up with the football captain, anyway?”

“Whatever.”

“Three… Two… One…”

“Refreshing…”

“Forty replies AND revenge for that soda can.”

T “Alright, sorry, I’m back.”

“Trish slides into the chair Spears just left from.”

T “Did someone bend this…?”

A “Spears.”

T “Oh.”

“She puts her plate down.”

“It’s a veritable bake sale.”

A “Hey, you can’t have dessert for dinner.”

T “Piss off.”

“The music fades until all that’s left is chatter.”

“Spears takes to the stage with mic in hand for once.”

Sp “Alright everyone. Before we end tonight’s prom we have a couple of items to take care of.”

Sp “First thing is-”

“The principal pulls a tiny gold sheaf envelope from his lapel and holds it up for the audience to gawk at.”

Sp “to announce prom King and Queen.”

“Well this is a foregone conclusion.”

“A few students are already congratulating Naser as he’s led by the arm by his handler.”

Sp “A drum roll, please.”

“Reed steps onto the stage with a small block in his arms.”

“He smiles and nods, pressing one of the myriad of buttons on the block.”

“A mediocre recording of the drumline plays over the speakers as Spears clears his throat and tears open the envelope.”

Sp “And your winners.”

Sp “For the one Mil.”

Sp “Twenty-twenty class.”

Sp “Aaaaaare….”

Sp “Naaaaaser aaaaand Naaaaoooomiiiiii!”

“He tosses the paper over his shoulder and yanks out the crowns from a pocket inside his jacket.”

“Spears backs out of the spotlight, giving a polite applause to the pair as they rush onstage to accept.”

“The rest of the class is in a celebratory uproar.”

“Spears offers the crowns to Naomi, who puts the larger one on Naser’s crest to droop off, and then dons the tiara..”

“The whole moment is picturesque, just like Naomi wanted.”

N “Thank you all so much, Volcano High!”

N “This is such an honor to receive.”

N “My, I don’t really have a speech prepared. But…”

N “In just one short year, we-”

Sp “Alright, alright, let’s stay on schedule.”

Sp “I promised your parents we’d be out of here by ten.”

Sp “To close off this wonderful night, I’ve asked a student to play one final song for us.”

Sp “Now I know she’s played before with… mixed results, but please give her a second chance.”

Sp “To finish up, please welcome Fang!”

“Spears puts the microphone up and gives a welcoming applause as the cheap curtains draw open.”

“Fang is standing onstage front and center, guitar --banjo in hand.”

??? “Wait, who?”

??? “She was there last time, wasn’t she?”

??? “I’ll just start recording…”

“She scans the room, a nervous look creeping onto her face.”

T “Those dicks!”

“I start waving my arms in the air, trying to catch Fang’s attention.”

“Trish sees what I’m doing and whistles with her thumb and index finger.”

??? “Who the-”

??? “-that the weeb?”

??? “Only he would-”

??? “-match made for losers-”

“Fang notices us and some of the nervousness melts off her face.”

“She takes a deep breath and starts strumming the first notes of her song.”

“It took half a year but she finally completed the song from the roof.”

“The cascade of cords is a slow build that increases tempo gradually.”

“Thinking back over all the practice sessions, Fang fretted over what exactly she would play.”

“Turns out, a rock ballad fit perfectly.”

“Both as a final song for prom.”

“And as a summation of Fang.”

“After all, as she plays her heart out on stage to the growing surprise and cheers of the crowd, this song is the best representation of her.”

“Trish and I cheer Fang on loudly.”

“The lyrics we composed together were a mix of her, admittedly, overly flowery and edgy poetry from her wall and my own shitposting.”

“Surprisingly it mixed well.”

“Apparently the rest of my classmates thought so too.”

“I spin around to get a better look at all the cheering students and immediately fix my eyes on Naomi.”

“And she looks pissed.”

“Naser looks like he’s enjoying the show, however.”

“Not wanting to let the moment go to waste, I get my phone out and zoom in as stealthily as I can.”

“I snap a picture of the seething prom queen before she stomps off, probably complaining how her perfect night was ruined.”

“Shame that someone other than her gets the spotlight for once.”

“Satisfied that Fang will enjoy seeing the picture, I begin pushing and squeezing my way towards the front of the crowd.”

“As soon as Fang’s eyes lock with mine, I catch a look of unreserved glee on her face.”

“That same look she had during their concert at Moe’s, or when we even found Moe’s in the first place.”

“She is finally in her element, and loving every second of it.”

“Fang’s voice is beginning to grow hoarse as she nears the end of her song.”

“As the song reaches its crescendo, her final lyrics are echoed by the crowd and reverberates throughout the hall.”

F “GOODBYE
VOLCANO
HIIIIIGH!”

“Her voice shakes as the words trail off, delivering a meteoric --heh finale to her show.”

“The guitar echoes for several seconds before applause begins to fill the air, cheers that I didn’t initiate this time.”

“I begin to join in, but take notice of Fang’s utterly stiff posture.”

“Eyes wide, wings pressed against her back, legs locked like a statue.”

“She looks like she’s about to faint from shock.”

“I realize I have an opportunity here and stone the fuck up.”

“God damn it, I’m going to take it.”

-- A “LEEEEEEROOOOOYYYYY JEEEEEEEENKIIIIIIIIIIIIIIINS”

“I push my way through the crowd and jump up on the stage, taking the nearly catatonic Fang into my arms.”

“Standing in an embrace on stage, my mind barely registers the crowd of students in front of us.”

“Fang gasps and snaps back to reality.”

“I can see the embarrassed mirth playing across her beautiful eyes.”

“No thought at all, I press my lips against hers.”

“Behind me I can hear the audience’s cheers grow louder.”

“I can even make out --heh Naser, Trish and Reed’s own supportive calls.”

“It’s a picture-perfect moment.”

“Wait. Missing one thing.”

“I extend one arm out toward Naomi, who I know is suffering from rectal-ragnarok by now, and raise one finger in particular at her.”

-- “It’s not the index or pinky, or the ring or the thumb, it’s the one you put up when you don’t give a fuck, and you won’t just put up with the bullshit they pull, ’cause they’re full of shit too, and some kid getting bullied and he shoots up his school.”

-- “Wise words and actions from a wise ass wigga.”

“There, picture-perfect.”

“...”

10. ending/epilogue

10a (KO_OP ending)

The morning after, Anon wakes to find that Fang left already before waking him up. He tries texting Fang and instead gets a threatening response from her father. He spends the next two days playing vidya.

The following Sunday night, Fang comes over to Anon's house to spend the night, returning as a result of their garbage relationship and codependence. The following morning in his sleep Anon notices the bed shift, but doesn't get up. He wakes up several hours later, and rushes to get to school, cursing that Fang didn't wake him up and left without him. He gets a text on his phone that reads the lyrics of the song Fang was working on in part four. Anon freaks out and starts sprinting towards the school.

Cut back to Anon finally arriving at the campus where the other students are outside being counted by the teachers. Trish spots Anon and screeches, pointing and crying that it's all his fault. All the other students look. Anon walks through the school doors without anyone trying to stop him. Anon knows Fang would be on the roof, and bolts for the stairs. On getting to the second floor, he sees several bodies, including Naser who is bleeding out on the floor. They lock eyes, and Anon continues for the rooftop.

When he gets to the door to the roof, he hesitates, praying that it really isn't really Fang doing this. He opens the door and sees Fang with sun behind her, looking like an angel of death. She fires the gun at Anon, barely missing him. Horrified, she backs towards the edge of the roof, and Anon pleads for Fang to stop, put down the gun, and try to talk things out. Anon keeps approaching Fang, who keeps backing towards the edge. Fang's heel goes over the edge, and Fang looks

back. She looks back at Anon, drops her gun, gives one last smile, and jumps.

Three weeks later Anon is at Fang's funeral. Her parents and Trish are present. Anon watches from a distance. After everyone leaves. He walks up to her grave, and leaves behind a guitar pick she'd given him. Fang's grave reads her real name and the lyrics from the song she'd sent Anon.

“I wake up the next morning with my head cradled in my arms.”

“My back aches from the lack of proper bedding, but that’s hardly anything new.”

“Groggily, I pull myself to my feet.”

“I pull back the curtain to reveal that a thick sunday fog had rolled in overnight.”

“What time is it…?”

“Guess I’ll check my phone…”

“Ten AM, huh…”

“Damn, I slept a while.”

“...Did Fang sleep well?”

A “Fang, you up?”

“The bed is empty.”

A “Oh.”

“Wait a second.”

“My phone has seventy missed calls and over a hundred texts from Naser…”

“That’s right, my phone was on silent last night for prom.”

“He’s probably just worried about Fang, but by Raptor Jesus’ right nut man.”

“I open the most recent voicemail.”

FangDad “By Raptor Jesus’ left testicle if Fang is not home within the hour I will hunt you down and mount your head on my trophy wall! You will RUE the day that-”

“Whoa.”

“Next one…”

FangDad “Maybe I didn’t make myself fucking clear. You will be sleeping with the fishes if Lucy is not home in the morning. I have a particular set of-”

“I’m starting to get the idea.”

“All the texts are written in a similar vein.”

“I try texting Fang to see if she got home safe.”

“Anon: hey, you alright?”

“Anon: just noticed your dad was pretty livid last night”

“Anon: he mustve been writing all night long”

“...No immediate response.”

“Well, she’ll see it when she sees it.”

“S’not like I can do much else for Fang right now.”

“I take note of the mess that Fang created, a reminder of how badly I fucked up.”

“Fuck me. So this is what they mean by Prom Night disasters.”

“I always thought it was just a euphemism for teen pregnancies.”

“There’s laminate… something, splinters all over the floor from my dresser.”

“And a check inside my bathroom reveals that The Duke managed to crack my porcelain throne.”

“Shit. No way am I getting my deposit back now.”

“I check the controller carefully, only barely relieved that there’s no damage.”

“After I’ve swept up the bits of broken dresser I find I have no real clue what to do.”

“A check of my phone again shows that Fang’s at least seen my texts.”

“I sigh.”

“How do I make this up to her?”

“I feel like a fucking heel right now.”

“The XROX is still running, might as well finish --the fight(tm) Rock Ring.”

“It’ll take my mind off things at least.”

“...”

“Master Grug, you mind telling me what you’re doing on that boat?”

“Ooga booga, finish this fight.”

“Guess I’ll play the next one, I really don’t feel like doing anything else today.”

“...”

“Wake Grug when you need Grug.”

“Really wish I could just float away in an iceberg like Master Grug after last night.”

“I glance at my phone and realize I spent ten hours playing Rock Ring.”

“My mind was turned off for most of that, guess I just lost track of time.”

“I’m shaken from my thoughts by a knock at my door.”

“The door I forgot to lock.”

“Oh god, I’m gonna be murdered, butchered, my body parts sold on the black market and turned into some disgusting rhinorex’s sex toys.”

“Hopefully in that order.”

“Before I can search for my knife, the door opens to reveal…”

F “Anon? You- oh! Hey…”

F “Uh… Why are you huddled in the fetal position?”

A “Fang? Oh thank fuck.”

“I deflate, slumping lifelessly on my bed.”

A “I thought your dad was here to kill me.”

F “Ah. Yeah. Sorry.”

“Fang sets her backpack down on the kitchen table.”

F “So…”

“Shit. Should have actually thought about what I should say to her.”

A “Fang, about last ni-”

F “It’s fine.”

A “-ight.. What?”

F “It’s fine, Anon. I don’t blame you for what happened.”

“What.”

F “In fact, I’m sorry for overreacting last night.”

“There’s something about this all that is setting off alarms in my head.”

“I don’t know what kind though. Or why.”

A “I… What?”

F “I said I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have blown up on you like last night.”

A “Even if it was my fault? I should have-”

F “It isn’t, Anon.”

A “But-”

“My words are cut off. My mind goes completely blank.”

“Fang’s hands grip my dirty dress shirt tightly as her beak presses against my parted lips, her tongue invading my mouth.”

“She pulls away abruptly, leaving me confused and lightheaded.”

A “I..wha...Fang?”

--A “Is that a gun in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?”

F “It’s fine, Anon. Everything is fine. --♪Everything is awesome.♫”

“Her hands guide me down onto my bed and she straddles my lap.”

“...”

“Sometime in the night the bed shifts.”

“I hear the bathroom door close so I pay it no mind and drift back to sleep.”

“Eventually my internal clock wakes me up.”

“Stretching and yawning, realize that it’s a lot brighter than normal.”

“Did I sleep in?”

“The alarm clock on my table has been unplugged…”

“I reach over to grab my phone to check the time.”

“Nine-o-two AM?”

“Oh shit, Fang and I are beyond late.”

“Wait, where is Fang?”

“Her backpack is gone, too.”

“Oh come on, she went to school without me?!”

“I rush to put my clothes on and get out the door as soon as possible.”

“About halfway there my phone buzzes in my pocket.”

“Unread texts from Fang?”

[i]”Fang: ♪ Control over my life you denied,
And now death approaches from the sky,
Why'd it be me you had to vilify?
I guess this is Goodbye, Volcano High ♫” [/i]

“The cryptic message stops me in my tracks.”

“Something is definitely wrong.”

“This almost reads like…”

“The adrenaline pushes my feet back into a desperate bolt towards the school.”

“The whole time my mind floods with horrid worst-case scenarios.”

“I tell myself I’m just worrying, but my mad sprint betrays the lie.”

“As I approach the school, I notice a crowd through the haze.”

“Surely it’s just a drill.”

“The deceit is shattered when I see the crowd consists of students huddling and crying, with teachers quietly making sure everyone is accounted for.”

“...Where’s Fang?”

“She has to be in this crowd.”

“There’s just a fire in the school that scared people.”

“She’s in this crowd somewhere.”

T “YOU!!”

“The voice calls out through the silence for all to hear.”

“Trish moves to stand a dozen feet in front of me on the pavement.”

“A shaky finger directing malice towards me.”

“She’s redfaced, streams of tears running the mascara down her face.”

T “WHY DID YOU COME HERE?!?”

“Blurred heads turn to the commotion.”

T “YOU BASTARD!!”

T “WHY COULDN’T YOU JUST LEAVE US ALONE?!”

T “NOW JUST LOOK WHAT HAPPENED!!”

T “LOOK WHAT YOU’VE DONE!”

T “ARE YOU HAPPY?”

“I can’t say anything.”

“Is this really happening?”

T “LEAVE US ALREADY!!”

T “YOU SHOW UP, GET THEIR ATTENTION, AND NOW… AND NOW…!”

“She chucks her phone through the air.”

“It misses by inches and smashes on the ground somewhere behind me.”

T “I WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOU THE WHOLE TIME!!”

T “I WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOU!! YOU!!”

“By now her tirade becomes incomprehensible screaming.”

“A teacher has to hold her back and try directing her to a nearby curb to sit.”

“...I don’t have time for this.”

“Where is Fang?”

“I gotta get in that building.”

“I turn around and dash away into the fog as Trish is being consoled by a group of students.”

“The side door is still unlocked, and I’m able to slip in without being noticed.”

“The halls are silent, despite it all.”

“My footsteps clatter through the empty halls.”

“It’s third period now, Fang always talks about having to deal with Naomi in Econ.”

“That’s not on this floor, fuck!”

“I pause when I reach the stairwell upwards.”

“I can’t say for sure what, but my instincts are screaming at me to not go up, to turn back now.”

“... I can’t.”

“My hand lightly glides along the handrail while I cautiously cross the stairs to the second floor.”

“The first thing that hits me is the smell.”

“That electric, almost metallic stench of wet ozone.”

“I’ve never been in a real fight before, but even so…”

“It’s a smell everyone instinctively knows.”

“I couldn’t tell what sound I made, because I frankly don’t remember.”

“All I will ever remember from this is the sight of my former classmates splattered across the halls like bags of waste.”

“The spills and trails of blood tell the story of their final moments.”

“Two were trying to run and still remain face down in their final resting places.”

“One slumped from a locker, smearing his remains all the way down like a puppet string.”

“And the last one, who tried fighting back, now clumped in the middle of the hallway soaked in the collective pooling blood.”

“It was Naser.”

“This isn’t real, none of this is real.”

“I’m just having a nightmare after last nights’ episode.”

“Things are just fine, I’ll return to reality soon…”

“...”

“...”

“...”

“Please…”

“...God...Damn it...”

“...Where is Fang…?”

“I just need to find her.”

“There’s one open door in the hall, the one closest to the battlefield.”

“I already know I’m not going to see her.”

“Fang hasn’t been in that room since she started.”

“The only thing in there is the huddled corpse of our student council president.”

“...Guess she didn’t get that ‘perfect highschool life’ in the end.”

“...”

“The stairs.”

“There’s only one place she can be.”

“One place where she’d go.”

“When I turn back to the stairwell, something makes a wet thud behind me.”

“Somehow, Naser’s still alive.”

“He’s moved his arm in my direction, and still has the strength to move a bit.”

“His eyes meet mine for a moment.”

“Disappointment.”

“Sorrow.”

“Mourning.”

“...”

“I can’t focus on him.”

“He’s got seconds left, anything I tried would just be a waste of time.”

“His hand makes a wet slap against the hard tiles one last time while I start up the stairs.”

“Somehow, the remaining two flights of stairs have gained another several hundred steps.”

“I haven’t seen who it was yet, it might not be her.”

“You know well it can only be her.”

“How could I have known this would happen? This isn’t my fault..!”

“You had just as much a hand in this as she did.”

“Fang isn’t here. She’s at home being grilled by her father for seeing me again.”

“She’s behind that door with a loaded gun.”

“...How long have I been standing here, staring at the doorknob?”

“...How much longer could I get away with putting it off?”

“As it is, it’s not the worst case scenario.”

“Even if Naser and Naomi are gone…”

“There’s a chance it’s not Fang up here.”

“I’d rather just stand here forever.”

“Relishing in the possibility that there’s some hope left.”

“However.”

“Time stops for no one.”

“Not even me.”

-- “Unless you happen to be a British vampire named after an Italian American metal singer.”

“The police sirens have been outside for a while.”

“I can’t ignore them any longer.”

“I owe Fang this much at least.”

“...”

“The doorknob is still cold on my hand.”

“I turn it and exit to the rooftop.”

“In the dense morning fog the only thing to stand out is the silhouette.”

“One that I easily recognize.”

A “Fang.”

“She’s silent. I can’t even tell if she’s looking at me or not.”

A “Fang, please. Say something.”

“My legs feel leaden as I approach her.”

A “Fang. Come on. T-this is all…”

“Slowly more and more details come too.”

“The revolver that hung limply from her fingers.”

“The splatter of blood on her pants.”

“Her wings with multiple bald patches on them.”

“And the sound of her ragged breaths.”

A “Fang…”

“My fingers brush against her shoulder.”

“*Bang*”

A “ARGH!”

“Hot, searing pain.”

“My left leg crumples under me.”

“As I fall I see Fang’s beautiful amber eyes.”

“They’re red and puffy, with makeup-less tears running freely down her cheeks.”

F “A-Anon… WHY ARE YOU-!”

A “Aaaah… haaaah… Fang… Why…?”

F “Y-you weren’t supposed to be here!”

F “You shouldn’t have come here!”

A “Fuck… Because… Because I love you! Haaaaaah.”

“I struggle to balance on my left leg. The hole in my shin dribbles blood down to the floor.”

“I don’t care though.”

“I hobble forward.”

“Fang steps back.”

F “S-stay back!”

“The revolver clatters against the concrete, spent on ammo.”

A “Fang… please…”

“A painful step forward.”

“She takes another back.”

F “Anon!”

A “Just come downstairs with me… It’s not over, it doesn’t have to be this wa-”

“With a crunch, my shin gives out completely, lurching me forward onto my hands and knees.”

“I have to keep going.”

“Even if it’s on my knees.”

“I can feel myself slowing.”

“My thoughts cloudy.”

“The blood loss...”

“The pain is so intense, however.”

“It brings some clarity to my mind.”

“Enough that I can drag myself forward.”

A “Please, come down with me.”

F “Oh-oh god. Oh my god. S-stop…”

“The sharp bone pokes and tears through my leg muscle.”

“I briefly look behind me, the trail is spilling out and making my other leg wet.”

“Bile rises up my throat at the sight.”

“I swallow hard and look back to Fang.”

“I have to reach her.”

“I can still fix this.”

“I can still save her.”

“Fang keeps backing away as I try to get closer, remaining out of my reach.”

“Fang stops and catches her balance.”

“Her foot is halfway over the edge.”

“We’ve reached the edge of the rooftop.”

“End of the line.”

A “Fang.”

A “Look at me.”

“Her head shakily turns from the concrete below to meet my eyes again.”

A “Back away from there, please.”

F “I-I… I…”

A “It’s not over.”

A “Stay with me here, please.”

F “I…”

A “Don’t leave me alone.”

“We stare for an eternity, all through the police’s screaming below.”

“Fang looks below once more, down the three story drop to the walkway below.”

“The walkway we’d passed through so many times to get to classes without a second thought.”

“The walkway we crossed daily with our friends through all our trials.”

A “Please…”

“She looks to me again, less shakily this time.”

“The sides of her mouth curl into a warm smile.”

“The last of her tears falls.”

-- F “Goodbye, Volcano High!”

-- “Fang dabs and then does the sickest flip off of the school roof.”

“She jumps.”

A “Fang!”

“I can’t look over.”

“I don’t want to see it.”

“The authorities betray my final wish of death by bursting through the door at that exact minute.”

-- “After all these years of tax evasion, they finally got me!”

“I drift into unconsciousness when they start wrapping my leg.”

“...”

“Three weeks pass.”

“Probably.”

“All I can remember is the sterile hospital room and an endless lineup of reporters.”

“The whole incident made national news.”

“Apparently I had become ‘the brave soul who took a bullet to stop a school shooting.’”

“But to everyone I know I’m just the one who caused all this.”

“After I refused to answer the constant pestering enough, I was finally left in blissful solitude.”

“I expected a visit from Spears, or Reed, or Stella or someone.”

“But they never came.”

“I got discharged just yesterday.”

“I’ll need to stay on a crutch for a few months, but that’s hardly the wound I'm worried about.”

“...Her funeral was today.”

“I wasn’t invited, of course.”

“But I can’t just leave it either.”

“So I wait out of sight several hundreds of feet away for the remaining family members to trickle out of the crowd and go home.”

“The last figure lingers for over an hour.”

“If anyone, he’s the one who deserved this the least.”

“He was right the whole time, about me.”

“And here I am, defiling her grave with my presence.”

“Eventually, he too leaves.”

“The alternations of footsteps and the crutch make me feel more mechanical than human.”

“Then again, that may be true regardless of having a crutch.”

“The two graves are right next to each other.”

“Various flowers pollute the fresh mounds.”

“In memory of Naser. Loving son and brother.”

“... I’m sorry, man.”

“I hobble over to the other headstone.”

“Here lies dearest Lucy. Heaven restores you in light.”

“They buried her using her real name. -- lmao.”

“God damn it.”

“This is all my fault.”
“None of this would have happened if I noticed something was wrong.”
“If I just supported Fang more instead of getting into a fight.”
“If I never got between her and her friends by telling her how I felt.”
“If I never bothered Fang and just stayed to myself.”
“...If I never moved to Volcaldera in the first place.”

“Fuck.”
“And because of me Naomi and Naser and Fang and the others are gone.”

“Because I’m too fucking stupid to see any of the warning signs.”
“I should be crying right now.”
“I should be screaming to the world why I should have died instead.”
“But instead I just feel…”
“My final plea to Fang races through my head.”
“Don’t leave me alone.”
“I just feel completely and utterly and hopelessly alone.”

“The sprinkling rain stops.”

“Seems the world is tired of my monologuing.”

“Like Trish said, I’m just some nobody from the middle of nowhere.”

“And the only person I ever cared about is gone.”

“The split second I thought I was somebody, I ruined everything.”

“So now, I’m back to being nobody.”

“...”

“It’s better this way.”

“...”

--“*BANG*”

--A “Reed?! I thought you OD’d!”

--F “That’s just what she wanted you to think.”

--“Reed stood with his flask held up, the cap unscrewed and steam hissing from the carf flowing out.”

--“Next to him sat Stella, comatose in a wheelchair with an oxygen mask on her snout.”

--R “This world is born... From Brazil. The moment Brazil became a meme is the moment the shitposts sprang to life.”

--“Reed coughs, the carf flooding his system making it more difficult to speak.”

--R “Taking it all back to Shitposts solves nothing. So long as Brazil remains... Shitposts... Will eventually grow to a meme ending again. And so... Our goal... Is to erase Brazil.”

--“He moves behind the insensate stegosaurus.”

--“There’s a silent hiss as Reed closes the flow of air to Stella.”

--R “Even the mighty Game devs began with a single autist. That one autist’s desires grew huge... Bloated. We realized too late... That we had created a beast.”

--“Stella spasms wildly, limbs flailing wildly as she tries to breath.”

--R “We had helped turn Brazil... Into a narrative. This sin... Was ours. And for that reason…”

--“Reed ignores her, even as her movements slow.”

--“His own coughing grows worse and his voice loses strength.”

--R “I'm taking it upon myself to send this story... Back to Brazil.”

--“Finally, Reed collapses next to Stella.”

--“Finally, the memes and Shitposts.”

--“Have returned to Brazil.”

“-ENDING ONE OF FOUR-”
“-Bowling for Volcano High-”

10b (bad ending)
Anon and Fang break up. After a timeskip Anon drops out of college due to apathy towards goals. He returns home and is looking for work when he steps on a loose flyer offering for a job at the pizza joint. Anon checks it out. While he's waiting to grab an application, Fang's band goes onstage to play. Anon realizes the poster on the front of the shop was advertising her playing tonight. The place is basically empty. Fang doesn't recognize Anon, and he doesn't care enough to approach. Fang doesn't seem happy with her situation. Anon wanders off and quotes some fag anime saying "seasons change, places change, but people? People never change".

“After Fang broke up with me everything just fell apart.”

“I couldn’t be bothered with school anymore, instead shutting myself in my room and replaying old games.”

-- “That’s right. I finally played my backlog.”

“Naturally, I flunked out.”

“With time on the lease running out, I had to make a decision soon..”

“College isn’t an option, so my choices were…”

“Minimum wage job, military, or going homeless.”

-- “Or, Raptor Jesus forbid, indie video game development…”

-- “That being said, I could just learn to draw and commission furry porn.”

-- “Or maybe I could become a costhot. If only I could afford a wig and a couple of skirts…”

-- “And /fit/ can teach me how to get a femboy body too!”

“I’d rather not have stuck around town, and being homeless wasn’t very appealing either.”

“So that November I signed up for the Navy as a PACT Seaman.”

“The worst mistake of my life, and that’s really saying something considering how I got here.”

“I was sold on the idea of picking a real job and getting training.”

“Instead I was at the mercy of brutal Boatswain's Mates.”

“I have the pig and chicken shit tattooed on my feet to prove it.”

“Or at least I did, until I sold my battlestation to get them removed.”

“I never want to touch a paintbrush in my life again.”

“Though every day since I’ve been eying rope…”

“For four years my life was suffering.”

“And now I’m back here.”

“Plane ticket to anywhere.”

“And I picked Volcadera Bluff.”

“What the fuck was I thinking?”

“There was a simple answer to that.”

“I wasn’t.”

“Just like I wasn’t thinking on that beach.”

“People don’t change, after all.”

“I managed to get my old apartment in Skin Row back and it’s somehow even more of a shithole than it was four years ago.”

“Only good thing out of the Navy was the monthly check.”

“Fucking ladderwells. The steps finally got me in the end.”

“Once I got my general discharge papers I vowed to never step foot on a ship again.”

“Instead I’ve locked myself away in this room.”

“Just listlessly drifting through life.”

“Just like I always wanted.”

“The trash from all the deliveries has turned it into a small landfill.”

“I’m out of smokes, I’m out of liquor, my apartment smells like a shallow grave.”

“I really need to go out for once.”

“I vaguely recall there being a pizza place nearby, some chain on the edge of Skin Row.”

“Pizza always helps. And it’s cheap.”

“And there’s a smoke shop nearby.”

“With that plan settled I grab the jacket that I haven’t worn in weeks.”

“I give it a quick smell check before putting it on and heading for the door.”

-- “Oh good this isn’t the toilet rag.”

“As I walk through the front of the building I feel the burning bright light of the setting sun searing my eyes.”

A “Argh, fuck! It’s like getting skullfucked by one of Stony’s light bars!”

“After stumbling around like Helen Keller for a few moments, my eyes finally adjust to the sunlight and I start to make my way down the street.”

“Pizza time here I come.”

-- insert spiderman pizza music

“...”

“There’s only a few people inside the joint when I enter.”

“The entire place could be described as ‘slow’.”

“A cashier leans on one arm over the counter, the customers’ pizza already looks cold on their plates, an ambient track plays at a molasses pace.”

“Time itself seems to be dilating in here.”

“I order two slices to go and wait by the counter for the cashier to meander to the back for a new stack of boxes.”

“Out of the corner of my eye I notice that the place has a small stage tucked into the back.”

“Oh, so they have live music?”

“The current song ends and they shift amongst themselves to get the next one ready.”

“The drummer taps his drumsticks together and starts a basic percussion line.”

“After a few beats the dreary singing begins and I feel my heart drop.”

“No matter how much of my memory I repress, I could never forget that voice.”

“I throw an inconspicuous glance across the room and confirm my suspicions.”

“I could barely recognize Fang.”

“Her long gray hair is now totally shaved off and she has tattoos down both of her arms.”

“The thick black eyeliner makes her once bright amber eyes seem dull.”

“And the expression on her face is one of absolute misery.”

“The other two don’t look any better off either.”

“I don’t think Fang’s seen me yet.”

“Or doesn’t recognize me.”

“The cashier returns with some cardboard boxes and packs my order into a neatly-folded package.”

“I hesitate with the box in my hand.”

“Fang is right there.”

“I could take everything back. Everything that went wrong all because of that fight.”

“If I try talking to her, she might forgive me.”

“Give us both a fresh start.”

“Things could go back to the way they were, back before...”

“Before…”

F “Trish was right about you.”

“I…”

“I should get the smokes before the store closes.”

“The bell on the door jingles it’s farewell, and I open the box to eat the first

slice.”

“As the taste of cardboard fills my mouth I try to erase the last few minutes from my memory.”

“But I know it won’t ever leave.”

-- “Attack snoots on fire off the shore of Volcadera Bluff. I’ve seen the meteor intended to kill us all in a parallel universe glittering in the darkness over Volcano High.”

“None of my memories will.”

-- “Never lost to time, unlike tears in rain.”

“Because I haven’t changed.”

-- “Wind blows, rain falls, seasons shift. But… people.”

“People never change.”

-- “Time to die.”

-- “Cue Vangelis.”

“-ENDING TWO OF FOUR-”
“-Anon and the Infinite Sadness.-”
OR “Punished Anon: A Man Denied His Happiness”

10c (good ending)
Some time after graduation, Anon goes off for college. Fang is distraught and begs Anon to promise to return. Anon promises.

After graduating college after four years with a bachelors' degree in business, Anon returns to town. He notices a street fair is in town, with a bunch of kindergarteners running around. While watching, he hears someone call out to him. Fang offhandedly mentions she's been waiting for so long. Anon doesn't realize it's Fang until she gets close and hugs him. They agree to meet up again to talk, and return to the pizza place they'd had a concert at so many years ago. Fang plays a piano cover of one of her songs, and they end up walking through town, rekindling their love for each other. Eight months later, they get married. Anon can't help but think there's something a bit off with Fang.

“-Three years later-”

“Volcadera Bluffs. New duty station. Recruiting teens to suffer just like I did.”

“Good times, good times.”

-- “Especially when I saw Osaurus Bin Laden go out like a bitch.”

-- “Say what you will about the guy, at least he had good taste in games and anime.”

“With my rucksack on my back and a cheap rolling case at my side I make my way down to my old stomping ground for some cheap living.”

“Three years. I wonder if Lucy still lives here.”

“There’s new buildings in the Galleria. Not to mention it’s gotten even more labyrinthine.”

“The sun reflecting off the mirror polished windows are baking me alive in my JDUs.”

“Thinking back, I think there’s a park nearby that has a decent vending machine.”

“Mentally retracing my steps from my senior year I manage to find the park.”

“Looks like they’re holding some kind of festival, with all the booths set up and tyranno tykes running around.”

“There’s an unoccupied picnic bench, miraculously, so I set my heavy bags carrying my entire life down and pop open my water bottle.”

“Sitting here, I can’t help but reminisce about the last time I was here.”

“There’s an awful lot I left behind here.”

“Like my highschool sweetheart.”

“The dicks in my old platoon never did believe me.”

“Then again I didn’t want to show that photo album her mom gifted me.”

“Raptor Jesus, I miss her.”

“I wonder if she remembers that promise.”

F “Anon?”

“Hm?”

“I look up to see a pterodactyl in a floral print dress running full tilt towards me.”

F “ANON! YOU REMEMBERED!”

“What.”

“I stand up and prepare to take her down.”

“I am poorly prepared however.”

“She lunges at me and before I think to grab my cheap ass kabar her beak mashes roughly against my lips.”

“What.”

“I curse my instincts as my hands reflexively hold my amorous attacker by her hips.”

“Wait.”

“I pull back, both for air and to figure out if this is who I think it is and not some well dressed sexual harassing lady-hobo.”

A “Lucy..?”

F “You remembered our promise!”

“Right. Right.”

A “That I’d come back and be with you. How could I forget?”

“I finally have a chance to take Lucy in.”

“Gone is the halter top, torn jeans, and spiky hornband.”

“In their place, a simple golden sun dress and a large red ribbon tied around her head crest, looking for the world like a pair of red bunny ears.”

“Her hands remain on my shoulders, and I can see that she’s checking me out now.”

“I’m proud to say I’m no longer a lanklet, especially with how my uniform blouse’s rolled up sleeves feel like they’re cutting off the blood flow to my hands.”

F “You’ve really changed since I last saw you, Anon!”

F “I’m so glad you’re safe after all these years!”

F “I got so worried for you, what if something happened overseas…”

F “What if you got lost or hurt...”

F “What if you never returned at all…”

A “Hey, have more faith in me.”

A “I still got all my limbs, right?”

A “I didn’t get bruised too bad.”

A “Like uhh, remember that time I fell down the stairs?”

A “I’m pretty indestructible, yeah?”

“...Maybe I’ll wait before showing her my scars.”

F “Wow, you’re pretty amazing…”

A “What’ve you been up to?”

F “Oh, I got my Associates and then-”

??? “MIIIISSSS LUCCYYYYYYYY!!!”

“Fang shrugs.”

F “And then this.”

“A little T-rex runs up to the table.”

??? “MISS LUCY!! MISS LUCY!!”

F “Now Vince, there’s no need to yell this close.”

F “What’s wrong?”

??? “I was playing with Jared and he said, he said that earthquakes happen when my mommy gets out of bed!!”

??? “Tell him it’s not true!!”

A “Tell him that his mom has a secret daddy she doesn’t tell anyone about.”

F “Anon!”

??? “Okaaay!”

F “Oh no you don’t.”

F “JARED, GET OVER HERE.”

“After clearing up the squabble, Lucy slumps over the picnic table again.”

A “Want me to get you a water bottle or something?”

F “No thanks, I had lemonade earlier.”

F “The fair’s some annual town hunting celebration, this year the people in charge had extra funding.”

F “So today they’re letting the local schools have a field trip here free of

charge.”

A “... Need another chaperone?”

F “I’d love to, but parents get really upset about this sort of thing.”

F “You have to be qualified and certified to look after these guys.”

A “Oi naehd a choild moindin’ loicence, yeh? Pray-ay bonkahs, yeh.”

“I chuckle aloud at my own silly accent. Lucy’s giggles echo my mirth.”

“Lucy’s giggles slowly melt away and a trickling tear leaves from her eye.”

F “You’re really back…”

“Her arms wrap around me tightly, as if afraid I’ll disappear at any moment.”

“My hand rubs comforting circles across her back, soothing her.”

A “Yeah. I’m back, Lucy.”

A “I’m surprised you waited for me here.”

F “Of course. That promise means the world to me, Anon.”

“We stay embraced in the hot sun for just a moment longer before I let go again.”

??? “Hey, Lucy, it’s already one.”

??? “we better start getting the kids together to get back to school.”

F “Oh, that’s a chaperone. Is it really already one?”

F “Sorry, I got to go deal with the little troublemakers…”

F “Does your phone number work again?”

A “It’s the same one, yeah.”

F “Oh, good! I’ll text you later then.”

“She pats my back as she gets up and starts to head off to rally the children.”

A “Err… Wait, Lucy!”

“She turns around.”

F “Yes?”

A “After you get off work tonight, do you uh…”

A “Do you wanna grab a coffee or something?”

“Lucy flashes a radiant smile.”

F “Absolutely.”

“She strides off, already yelling for two toddlers to stop trying to use gum as horn coloring.”

“I lean back into the table, cracking my spine.”

“First day back and already got a date arranged with Lucy.”

“Must be cashing in my good karma after suffering through all those MREs.”

“...”

“I’d better go unpack and get a shower first.”

“...”

“Later that afternoon Lucy texted me about where we should meet up.”

“We both tossed around various ideas of grandiose restaurants or other extravagant plans.”

“We ultimately decided to keep it simple and eat at Moe’s tonight.”

“I take the bus as usual, but I’m surprised to see Lucy roll into the parking lot in a mini cooper.”

“The restaurant has barely changed these past few years.”

“Except for Moe. He’d handed the place off to retire in the old country.”

“I expected Lucy to get that Meateor pizza she loved so much, but she just stuck to pasta.”

“I’m just happy to be eating real food for once.”

A “Y’know, part of me expected you to forget about the whole promise. That I’d come back and some lucky dino guy had already swept you off your feet.”

“She just smiles and gives a small laugh to that.”

F “The amount of guys I had to tell that my boyfriend was -- a Navy SEAL who knew over 300 ways to kill them with his bare hands just deployed and coming home soon…”

F “Anon, I’d never forget about you or your promise.”

“Yeah, the promise…”

“...”

“One year since I first joined Volcano High and it felt like just yesterday.”

“Stood out on the curb, all my belongings packed up into a single roller briefcase.”

“Even after I’d told Lucy about my plans to enlist, seeing her now broke my heart.”

“I can easily tell this is breaking hers, too, but she puts up a strong front to hide it.”

A “It’s only for a few years, Lucy. I’ll be back before you know it.”

F “I know, Anon. But…”

“I can hear the bus nearing. So can she if the whitening of her knuckles means anything.”

“My hands wrap around her’s, currently clutching tight to my jacket as if to keep me to herself.”

F “Anon, promise me.”

F “Promise you’ll come back.”

F “Promise me… please…”

“I place a chaste kiss on her forehead and smile.”

A “I will, Lucy. I’ll come home to you.”

“Her smile is watery and weak, but she nods.”

F “Please come back to me, Anon.”

“...”

F “...And now you’re back and I’m never letting you go again.”

--A “You can… stand to… let go of… my… neck… ack…”

A “I’m not going anywhere… Sweet Tooth.”

“Lucy rolls her eyes.”

F “You know, if you had said that back then I’d have hit you.”

A “Yeah, and then I’d have just done it again because you’re cute when you’re annoyed.”

“Lucy picks up the candle lighting the table.”

F “Remember our good friend here?”

“We exchange smirks.”

A “I guess we’ve both changed since then.”

F “Oh yeah? How so?”

A “I mean, when I first enrolled I had every intention of just laying low and not

sticking out.”

A “I didn’t care about making friends as long as it suited that goal.”

A “As long as I didn’t get bullied any more, I was glad to just blend in.”

F “Guess that plan fell apart.”

A “It did, yeah.”

A “I kinda blame you for that development.”

-- A “Although I would have gotten away clean with it, if it wasn’t for that meddling purple triceratops.”

F “Ha, I made you care about people.”

A “You did.”

“I reach across the table and wrap my fingers around her hand.”

A “It’s funny, this was where we had our first date.”

F “I remember.”

“The red glow of her cheeks tells she remembers it very clearly.”

F “I thought I’d murder Naomi back then.”

“We snicker together.”

F “You’ve stopped mumbling to yourself.”

A “Yeah. Finally fixed that.”

F “I’m gonna miss it, honestly.”

“Our fingers intertwined.”

F “Remember the beach?”

A “I’d never forget that.”

“Lucy’s voice weakens to a soft murmur.”

F “And what I said back then?”

A “Yes, I do.”

“She sniffles and casts a wet gaze to me.”

F “Thank you, Anon. For saving me. For coming back. For being here.”

F “Thank you.”

F “Thank you.”

“I can’t think of anything to say, and that’s fine.”

“The moment can’t be described with speech.”

“I stroke her hair slowly, and she leans her head into my palm.”

“It’s a perfect moment.”

“Here in the dim light of the candle, the fragrance of pasta and wine, and the soft ambience playing through the cheap speakers.”

“And I just noticed my elbow’s been sitting in my lasagna for the past minute.”

“I pull my hand back and take up my fork, purposely ignoring the red stain on my sleeve.”

A “Say, what ever happened to Reed and Trish?”

F “OH! ...When was the last time I spoke with them…?”

A “Hope Trish is alright, the two of you were friends for the longest time.”

F “I guess I… Didn’t feel the need to see them again?”

F “Looking back, they were terrible influences.”

A “I guess so...”

A “How about Naser then? He was real cool.”

F “Oh, he went off to college last fall.”

A “Naomi still with him?”

F “Yeah, actually.”

F “She was so sad seeing him go off, we cried together for hours.”

A “I… I see.”

A “So it’s just you and your parents now?”

F “Well, I moved out of my parents’ place last month actually.”

F “It’s a nice place over in the city --house of doors, but it’s a pretty big change, you know?”

A “Yeah, I know the feeling.”

F “My neighbors are pretty quiet.”

F “It’s been pretty lonely, honestly.”

“Lucy eyes are absolutely pleading.”

A “Weeeell, I’ve nowhere to stay just yet. Only got a motel room and all…”

A “And I think I’d rather keep you company than the roaches.”

F “I’d like that.”

“I smile and nod.”

“The rest of our dinner is in companionable silence, though occasionally I’d feel

Lucy’s foot brush against my calf slowly.”

“...”

“Fang’s apartment is a one-bedroom flat on the ground floor of a large apartment complex.”

“It’s certainly leagues better than the hole I stayed at before.”

“The living room is adorned with a few pictures of her family, and even one with me in it.”

“On the far end is a keyboard, with a hymn book sitting open across it.”

--F “Why don’t you have a seat, Anon?”

--F “I heard from one of my students you had said they were and I quote; ‘cute and funny.’”

“Lucy gestures to the pleather couch.”

F “You want something to drink?”

--A “Martini. Shaken, not stirred.”

--A “And if that’s no good, some agua, por favor.”

A “Anything’s fine.”

F “It’s a special occasion, I have just the thing.”

“Lucy hums as she goes to her kitchenette and rummages through a cabinet.”

“The clinking of fine crystal and the pop of a cork suggest something either super cheap or super expensive.”

-- A “A toast to the losers who write this shit.”

F “It’s Shiraz.”

A “Sounds fancy.”

F “It’s like twenty dollars at the supermarket.”

A “Still sounds fancy.”

“I’m handed a flute of red wine. Swirling it around a lil, Lucy takes the spot right next to me, our thighs pressing together.”

F “Cheers.”

A “Aye, kampai!”

-- F “Speak English you fucking weeb.”

“After we both finish our glasses, I wince from the tartness.”

A “Whoa, that’s strong.”

“The keyboard enters my field of view -- at 60 miles an hour.”

“Lucy notices my gaze.”

A “You still play?”

“Her face lights up, and she gets up from the couch.”

F “I do!”

F “Well, mostly just for my students.”

“She sits on the small stool and gets ready to play.”

F “I finally finished it, Anon.”

“I immediately recognize the melody she produces.”

“All the way back when I comforted her on the school roof.”

“The same song I heard countless times later, each more and more refined.”

“No matter if it was from a guitar, out of an amplifier, or on a keyboard, it always possessed the same nostalgic tone.”

“But each time she played the song to me, it seemed like it was missing something.”

“That final piece of the puzzle to unify the discordant tones.”

“Listening to her play it now, it suddenly dawns on me what that missing piece was.”

“The song is more than just Lucy’s raw emotions, it always carried a desire for something more.”

“Desire for support, for compassion.”

“Desire for an audience who would truly understand the meaning behind every word and every chord.”

“As arrogant as it sounds, I was the missing puzzle piece.”

“The song was meant for me.”

“As Lucy’s playing draws to a close, I rise from my spot and approach her from behind.”

“I see her visibly shaking as I wrap my arms around her, contending with a face full of feathers.”

A “It’s perfect.”

“She draws my arms closer, resting her beak along my forearms.”

F “Thank you.”

“We stay like this for several minutes before Lucy stands up and breaks out of my grip.”

“My eyes are drawn to hers, but she shifts her gaze to the floor and begins fidgeting with her hands.”

F “You know, it is getting kinda late…”

F “Do you… want to stay the night with me?”

“I open my mouth, but before I can find the words to respond I take her hands in mine.”

“I look directly into her amber eyes, the memory of which had never left me since we last saw each other.”

“My mind briefly searched for the right words before it struck me.”

“What I should have told her before I left, or during our dinner earlier.”

A “Lucy…”

“It just seemed right.”

A “I love you.”

“Tears form along Lucy’s eyes, I wipe one away with my thumb.”

“She leans into another kiss.”

F “... I love you, too.”

“ENDING THREE OF FOUR”

“-Volcano Highschool Musical-”

10d (gold ending)

>Start with time skip to December 26th 2020
>Fang and Anon are cuddling at his place, enjoying post Christmas hangover
>Anon’s looking through scrapbook Fang’s mom gave him
>Fang finally wakes up and embarrassed by Anon looking at the photos
>cuddle more
>lines about the presents Anon got
>New Roomba, a carpet, a ukulele and a designer jacket more fuck ugly than Naser’s
>talk about their future plans since Anon is leaving in 2 weeks
>Fang asks to take a break while they’re apart
>Emphasizes that she wants to find herself for real
>on her own
>Anon is fine IF they can still talk with each other
>”well obviously”
>go back to cuddling that’s implied to get more heated before scene change
>time skip to reunion
>Anon’s there in front of the school in a mirror to part 1
>more sure of himself, strolls in and signs in to the reunion
>first person he meets inside is Naomi
>and then Trish and Reed
>mirror their first meetings but with a more confident Anon
>Then Fang shows up
>Fang excuses herself and Anon from the group so they can have a one on one at the reunion bar
>jump ahead a few hours
>they’re on the roof, looking at the city lights like an ocean of lights
>both tipsy and just talking about their lives now
>eventually Anon says he’s staying in the Bluffs for good now
>has a good job there and everything
>Asks Fang if she wants to get dinner some time
>Fang turns him down because she’s too busy in the evenings
>but Fang says she’s open for breakfast and coffee
>Anon rephrases and Fang agrees
>ends on CG of them holding hands on the roof as the sun starts to rise
>credit roll is the polaroids in the scrapbook

Fang breaks up with Anon after deciding she needs to think about herself for a while. They part on good terms, and after a timeskip of five years Anon returns to VH for a high school reunion and finds his old acquaintances. Reed is 'the dude' from the Big Lebowski, Trish is more down to earth and is the Manager of a Horn Salon. Naomi dumped Naser and married into money, and Naser is still in college working on becoming a doctor. Anon finally finds Fang again, who is now a

music teacher. While in college, Anon used the help he got from Fang to express himself creatively more and is a sound engineer. They talk a bit on the roof about what's happened since they last met and decide to start going out again.

“-Six months later-”

“After prom night and graduation life slowed down.”

“I’ve been accepted to a college a few states away for a degree in sound engineering.”

“No worries about school except for the lunch card I still had to pay back.”

“Moe had been kind enough to give me a summer job to help with that.”

“Though I don’t think I can talk about some of the things I’ve seen.”

“I’ll never be able to look at marinara the same way.”

“But pasta-based trauma aside, it’s now the day after Christmas.”

“I’m sitting in my bed, looking through one of my favorite presents.”

“Fang’s mom was right, I am happy about all those photos.”

“As I look through the scrapbook spread across my lap I can’t help but reminisce about the best year of my life.”

F “*SSSSNRRRRRRK*”

“I have to contain my laugh, but Fang looks ridiculously cute curled up beside me in my bed.”

“Curled up around my pillow, suckling on her thumb.”

“And my present to her still hung around securely on her neck.”

“I go back to the scrapbook, enjoying the memories I’ve shared with my friends.”

“And to think I wanted to stay a loner when I first got here.”

“*Beep boop beep*”

“*VRRRRRRRRRMMMM*”

F “‘M UP!”

“The loud noise of Trish’s present makes Fang bolt upright.”

A “OOF!”

“And sends me tumbling onto Reed’s present.”

“The new Metal Gear RAYmba Mk.II bumps against my face, turns, and continues eating the crumbs off my new carpet.”

“Even from the floor I can say that both were really thoughtful gifts.”

“Reed was right, the carpet really helped to tie the room together.”

F “...Anon? You here?”

A “On the floor.”

“Fang’s face appears over the edge of my bed.”

F “Why are you on the floor?”

A “...Yoga?”

F “Riiiiight.”

“I sit up from the floor and shiver.”

“Volcadera Bluffs may not get snow, but the cold air and the ocean definitely make the town cold as shit.”

“I crawl back on to my bed and try to find my spot that I warmed.”

A “Fang you stole my warm spot!”

“In fact she’s taken up the entire bed. Her wings are spread wide and all of my blanket has been piled over her.”

F “Mine!”

A “Come on, you gonna let your boyfriend freeze?”

F “Yes.”

A “That’s just cold of you.”

“She groans at my pun but acquiesces, holding open the blanket and shuffling over.”

F “Hurry up! You’re letting the warm escape.”

“I slide into the blanket next to her, my arms automatically wrapping around Fang’s waist and drawing her against my chest.”

F “Mmmm.”

“Her beak rubs against me as she hums.”

“Aw yes. Cuddles. Best way to spend a cold day.”

F “Damn right.”

“I chuckle and reach for the scrapbook.”

F “You’re looking at that again?”

A “...Yeah?”

“Her face glows a soft pink in embarrassment.”

A “D’aaaaawww… Someone’s embarrassed.”

F “And someone is about to be on the floor again.”

“*VRRRRRM* *Beep boop beep*”

F “I think Mark Two would like the company.”

A “Sheesh, you’re always so grouchy in the morning.”

“I laugh even as her elbow digs into my chest.”

“Fang crawls on top of me and puts all her weight down on my lungs.”

“I only laugh more.”

“Not like Fang can do what a staircase could.”

F “Stop. Cuddles now. Scrapbook later.”

A “Hahahahalright. Cuddles it is.”

“She squeals when I roll us on to our side, bringing us face to face.”

“I can feel my own face glow as warm as hers, but I also have the same smile as her too.”

“I place a chaste kiss on the end of her snoot, eliciting some giggles from Fang.”

F “What did I say about that.”

A “Bout what?”

F “Kissing that!”

A “Mmmm gonna need to be more specific.”

F “Kissing my nose!”

A “Oh! You mean this!”

“I kiss her snoot again.”

F “Ugh, stop messing with the snoot.”

“I chuckle again.”

F “Fuck!”

A “I made you say it.”

F “Fucking insufferable.”

“I kiss the snoot one final time and get another elbow as my reward.”

F “In.suf.fer.a.ble.”

“I snatch the scrapbook at last.”

“Fang groans and hides her face in my chest.”

F “Why do you like that thing so much?”

A “Because your mom was right.”

“Fang groans again.”

A “Come on, there’s some embarrassing pics of me in here too.”

F “Like you making out with an anime girl again?”

A “Okay not that embarrassing.”

“I turn onto my back and Fang adjusts herself to lean on my shoulder.”

“The rest of our morning is spent cuddled in my bed, going through the scrapbook together.”

“When lunchtime rolls around, I have to face reality and make something to eat.”

“Especially since no restaurant in the city will deliver to this neighborhood.”

A “Alas, I must leave the warmth of the bed to make lunch.”

A “...This is gonna suck.”

F “Wear the thing.”

A “I’d rather just carry the blanket around.”

F “Mine.”

A “Pfeh.”

“I reach under the bed to retrieve the bag I tried hiding, and I pull out the jacket from within.”

“Two expertly stitched gorilla heads stare back at me, with the text ‘MNKY 4 LYF’ embroidered in gold thread.”

“I still don’t know if Naser is racist or if he really is just that clueless.”

A “This is great.”

F “It looks freaking fantastic, I don’t know why you don’t want to wear it.”

A “And you don’t see anything wrong with this?”

F “Nope.”

A “...You realize last month was Homo History Month, right?”

F “What’s that have to do with an ugly jacket?”

“I’ll sue them later.”

A “Alright, here I go.”

“I zip the abomination on and step out of bed, the wall of cold stinging my toes.”

A “Carbonara sound good?”

F “Why do you make it so weird? Most people just use tomato sauce.”

A “...Don’t ask questions you aren’t prepared to know the answer to.”

“I crack four eggs, separating the yolk from the whites and saving them in a tupperware for later.”

“Maybe a simple custard pudding for dessert later.”

“I grab some bacon, cheese and milk from the fridge, grating a healthy handful of cheese into the yolks and mixing with a splash of milk before dicing the bacon.”

“Boiling some water in the kettle to save time, I measure out the appropriate amount of spaghetti and toss it in the pot with the water and some salt before grabbing a pan and setting it on the stove.”

F “Stop acting like you’re on the cooking channel, Anon.”

“I start frying the bacon to render out the fat before adding in some pre-chopped garlic, sauteing until it’s fragrant.”

“When the bacon turns crispy, just in time for the spaghetti to finish cooking, I remove the pan from the heat while throwing in some of the pasta water to bring down the temperature.”

“The final step was to add the yolks, cheese and milk to the bacon and garlic with some more pasta water and toss it with the spaghetti until it all came together as a creamy, salty and delicious lunch.”

“All in less than ten minutes.”

A “It’s all ready.”

A “Alright, RAYmba, nap time.”

A “Move to the rug so we can eat.”

“Fang grumbles and starts shifting in the bed, so I turn my attention to making the plates.”

“I grab a few sodas from the fridge and place everything on the new rug for an indoor picnic setup.”

“Fang’s moved from being wrapped up on the bed to being wrapped up on the rug, laying on her stomach.”

“Her feet wagging back and forth in a pair of plush green dino slippers.”

A “Better hurry, in this weather this’ll get cold in minutes.”

A “Then again, the computer’s right there, I could always try running the snootcoin miner.”

F “That sounds like it’ll only work once.”

A “True.”

“We both start eating the pasta.”

“While I take the classic approach of just slurping the noodles, Fang has a harder time and resorts to just twisting the fork around and eating a whole clump at once.”

A “You plan on enjoying any?”

F “It’sh good. Like the uh, cheese.”

A “Why thank you.”

“Eventually lunch is reduced to greasy plates and crushed soda cans.”

“Fang moves her trash aside and rests in her arms.”

“She gestures her snout to the ukulele resting against the corner of the room.”

F “You gonna try playing that?”

A “I could, yeah.”

F “Do uh... do that song I taught you.”

“I happily oblige and rip off the bow still wrapped around the small instrument.”

A “I’m not singing for you, you know that, right?”

“Fang giggles as I begin plucking away at the tiny little strings, producing a very familiar melody.”

“My shrill rendition more resembled that first time Fang played it on the rooftop than her energetic performance at prom.”

“Despite my occasional fumbling, it still possesses that same nostalgic tone it always had.”

“When Fang begins humming along, I soon find myself joining in to make the song sound complete.”

“I wish moments like these could last forever.”

“But just like the music in the air, they always do and before long we reach the end of the song.”

“A comfortable silence fills the room after the notes fade.”

F “...I love that song.”

A “I hope so, you wrote it after all.”

F “Yeah, but you know we-”

“Her thought is interrupted by a knock at the door.”

F “You expecting company?”

“I give her a puzzled look in return before getting up and heading to the door.”

“My momentary fear of it being a potential addict or murderer are quelled upon opening the door, revealing-”

A “Principal Spears? What are you doing here?”

“Our ex-principal is squeezed into the narrow hallway, holding a delicately wrapped gift in his hands.”

Sp “Anon, I trust that you had a good Christmas?”

Sp “Normally I wouldn’t visit a former student like this, but I intend on making light of my offer during the school year.”

“He extends the gift towards me and I cautiously accept, beginning to open the wrapping paper.”

“Inside is a box set of some anime I’ve never heard of before.”

A “...’Rurouni Kenshin’?”

Sp “As I said, I am always open to giving some quality anime suggestions.”

Sp “I think you’ll find this quite enjoyable.”

A “I, uh… thank you, Principal Spears.”

“Spears gives a fatherly smile as I shake his hand.”

Sp “I hope you and Fang enjoy the rest of your holidays.”

A “Thanks, yeah. I’ve had fun exchanging gifts with my friends.”

Sp “I can see you’re wearing a new jacket now-”

“He stares with a certain thinly veiled disgust creeping on his face.”

Sp “Anon, I get that we live in a postracial world and all…”

Sp “But come on, have a little pride in yourself.”

“Fang struggles to keep her laughter in behind me.”

A “No it’s cool, Mister Spears.”

A “I’m taking it back.”

Sp “If you say so.”

Sp “At any rate, I shouldn’t keep you too long.”

A “You sure? I have some leftover lunch if you want to stick around a bit.”

Sp “I really appreciate the offer, but I have my own plans for lunch with my family.”

A “Alright. Thanks again for stopping by.”

Sp “Had to do it at least once before you leave next month.”

Sp “Be seeing you. Fang.”

-- “As Spears jumps from my porch to a nearby roof, he leaves something where he once stood.”

-- “This time a copy of Nichijou.”

“Fang throws a handwave back at him.”

“Spears clambers out the door and shuts it behind him, leaving just Fang and I in the room again.”

F “... That’s right, you’re leaving next month…”

“Fang curls up in the blanket.”

A “...Yeah…”

“I sit next to her on the ground and wrap an arm around her shoulder.”

F “Do you really have to go?”

F “Can’t you just go to community college here in the city?”

A “You’ve seen the acceptance letter, Fang.”

A “I got a scholarship to stay there at a fraction of the cost. I can’t just pass that up.”

F “But five years?”

A “You got plans of your own, don’t you?”

F “Yeah. So…”

A “So…”

F “We’re still gonna talk.”

A “Obviously.”

F “But…”

“Fang takes a deep breath.”

F “I’m not doing a distant relationship.”

“Oh…”

“Oh wow…”

A “Is this a break up?”

“Because ow, my fucking heart.”

“Fang shakes her head from side to side slowly.”

“Oh thank fuck.”

F “I don’t want to break up, Anon.”

F “But I was thinking…”

F “You’ve been helping me ever since you got here.”

A “Yeah, and you’ve helped me too.”

F “I know.”

F “But you’re leaving for college.”

F “So…”

F “I… Want to do some thinking.”

A “More thinking? Wow, that’s new for you.”

“The plastic plate bounces off my head harmlessly.”

F “...Ass…”

“Fang giggles as I fake like I’m on a soccer pitch.”

F “I want to do more thinking. Self-reflecting.”

F “This entire year has been one of the best in my life.”

F “And I want more of them like this.”

F “But with you gone I gotta make them good on my own, ya know?”

A “I get you.”

“I pull Fang closer, my chin resting atop her head.”

A “So, not breaking up.”

F “No, just…”

A “A break?”

“She giggles again.”

F “Yeah. A break sounds right. Not breaking up, just taking a break.”

A “Plus, I’m not leaving for a few weeks.”

“Fang perks up.”

F “True. That’s a few weeks to cram in all the cuddles I’ll be missing.”

A “Cuddles or cuddles?”

“Fang’s grin is just shy of mischievous.”

F “On the bed. Now. I’m collecting on those cuddles right now.”

A “Yes ma’am.”

“...”

“-Five Years Later-”

“July seventeenth.”

“Year 201M2025 BC.”

“Volcaldera Bluffs.”

“Weather conditions; hot as tits.”

“The evening sun is boiling hot and I’m reminded of one of the myriad of reasons

why I first loathed living here.”

“The sweat dripping in my eyes makes it difficult to see anything five feet in front of me.”

“Like a runt of a tree planted in the sidewalk that I swerve to avoid.”

“The air is hot and humid, and I can feel my body grow heavier as I get closer.”

“I can’t determine if it’s from the sweat soaking my clothes or the welling trepidation inside me.”

“It’s been five years since I’ve seen anyone here.”

“I’ve kept in touch with all of them.”

“But to see them again in person?”

“It’s the sounds that reach me first. The chatter of people milling about.”

???(Sage) “Bro”

???(Rosa) “It’s been too long!”

???(Stella) “It was only five years *Giggle*”

“I can make out the building now. I use the sleeve of my shirt to wipe the sweat from my eyes and brow.”

“I look at the name written on the arch over the entrance.”

“Volcano High.”

A “Still the perfect setting for a horror game. Or maybe a shitty WAD.”

“The attempt at humouring myself just made me feel more anxious.”

“A check of my phone says I’m thirty minutes early. Wonderful.”

“I move to the entrance, only to see all of the steps occupied by twenty-somethings waiting.”

A “Yo, this the line?”

Re “Anon?”

“A hobo raptor at the top of the steps pulls his oversized shades down to peer at me.”

Re “Ayyy Anon, what’s up dude?”

“I immediately recognize his voice.”

A “Hey Reed, what’s happening?”

A “You seem to certainly have uh… changed.”

A “Why do you look like uh… I don’t want to sound rude or anything, but…”

A “You look homeless, Reed.”

Re “Whaaaat?”

Re “Duuude, I’m not a hobo! I’m the richest raptor in the world, guy!”

-- Re “I”m so rich I use Bens as toilet paper and Warren Buffet asks me for pocket money.”

-- Re “I’m so rich, I own Sneed’s Feed and Seed. What a wild ride that was.”

“I think Reed’s lost it.”

Re “What’d you say, man?”

A “What? Nothing. No idea what you’re talking about.”

A “So, how did you get to become the “richest raptor in the world”?”

-- Re “I sold it.”

-- A “‘It’?”

-- Re “Yeah. I sold it. I’m the raptor who sold the world.”

Re “You wouldn’t believe it, man!”

Re “See, it all started with…”

“Reed proceeds to run his mouth off about a bunch of gibberish.”

“I cannot understand anything he's saying.”

“I think I heard ‘pharmaceutical business’ at one point?”

Re “...and then I was brought here by the birds, dude.”

Re “So what’ve you been up to, man?”

Re “You look like you haven’t changed a day.”

A “It’s not as exciting as your story, honestly.”

A “I just went off to college, got my bachelor’s, and now I’m just a sound engineer.”

Re “Sounds pretty sweet --epic, dude.”

“We stand there for a moment in the blazing heat.”

Re “Dude, it’s fuckin’ hot out here, you wanna get inside?”

Re “They got drinks n’ shit!”

A “Definitely, I need some air conditioning.”

“We quickly moved along to the gymnasium.”

A “Man, it really hasn’t changed. Takes me back.”

Re “Yeah, takes me back too, man.”

Re “Hold on, have you signed in yet?”

A “No, didn’t know I had to.”

“Reed gestures to the sign-in table.”

“The clerk is crouched behind the table sorting through a box.”

“I go over to write in my John Hancock and the person behind the counter stands up.”

“Seeing her in person now is like witnessing a possessed barbie doll.”

N “Oh!”

N “Anon, you made it!”

-- “Raptor Jesus on his cross of rock how terrifying!”

-- “Holy fuck it’s like looking at a living SFM video I feel like I’m about to vomit.”

A “Yeah, I did.”

A “Life been treating you well?”

N “Oh yes, just last year I moved in with my dear Kanyesaurus.”

“What the fuck is this world anymore?”

A “Real shame about his last presidential run.”

N “Oh, he got over it.”

N “There’s always 2028!”

N “Presidential yeezys shall rise again, he says.”

“WHAT THE FUUUUCK”

A “That reminds me, have you seen Naser’s college posts?”

A “He got top marks on his last exam.”

N “No, I lost touch with him about three years ago.”

-- A “And how long have you been dating Kanyesaurus?”

-- N “Four years, why?”

-- “It explains so much.”

A “Oh, sorry. How about work, then?”

N “I haven’t been working, mostly staying back at home and looking after the kids.”

-- A “THE kids or YOUR kids?”

-- N “Yes.”

A “Sounds like you got a pretty good deal going on.”

“I turn around to see a short line forming behind me.”

A “Sorry to keep you so long, I’ll get out of here.”

N “Thanks for catching up, Anon. When I’m done here we can chat more.”

-- “You too, you living plastic abomination.”

“I go rejoin Reed and we enter the gymnasium together.”

“The setup is rather similar to that prom night all those years ago, albeit without the foreign decor.”

“Young men and women mingle with small drinks and party foods across the floor.”

Re “Man, those look good. Come over here, I’ll get you a drink, on me.”

“I follow him over to the minibar. Trish is sitting in one of the seats, huddled over an empty glass.”

A “Trish, glad we found you here!”

“She looks up from her sulking and her face lights up at the sight of us.”

T “Anon! It’s been years!”

Re “Come on man, we’ve been texting this whole time.”

“Reed flashes two fingers at the barkeeper, who sets out a few glasses.”

A “Yeah, good to see you too.”

A “What’re you looking so gloomy for over here?”

T “It’s nothing that serious, just workplace drama.”

Re “What, your employees raise another beef with the concept of horn piercings again?”

T “No, this time it’s with the engraving tools.”

T “They’re telling me people would rather go to the dentist with all the drills we use.”

T “And mostly with my designs for hollowed-out horns.”

A “H-hollow?”

T “Of course, I even got in contact with a sculptor and figured out how to make them whistle in the wind!”

“Reed leans in to whisper in my ear.”

Re “One of the designs sounds like Road Warrior.”

“I shudder at the image.”

T “Don’t knock it, my satisfaction rate is a clean one-hundred percent!”

-- Re “Having only one customer doesn’t count.”

T “The only problem is getting people to be willing to try it.”

A “Sounds like there’s a lot of risk there, yeah.”

T “It’s not even that bloody, I only hire the best.”

A “B-bloody?”

T “What, never had a piercing before? Same thing.”

“Reed shakes his head.”

“I finish my drink and Reed downs his in one shot, tossing a few dollars on the counter.”

“

A “Fang! You’re here!”

F “Wha- I- dammit Anon, I told you to stop calling me that!”

Re “Isn’t that the name Lucy used back in senior year?”

T “Yeah, I think it was.”

A “Come on, you’ll always be Fang to me.”

“Lucy covers her eyes with her hands.”

F “You haven’t changed a bit, I swear.”

Re “C’mon, get over here. I’ll order us all another watchamacallit of drinks. It’s on me, the richest raptor in the wooooorld!”

“Reed cheerfully throws his arms up as he shouts out a prolonged ‘world’”

F “Sure, thanks. I can’t have too much though, I’m the event organizer and all.”

A “Sounds like a tough break.”

A “Wait, I thought you were the music teacher here.”

F “I’m getting there. Still working with Mister Jingo until he retires next year.”

F “Until then I’m a teachers’ assistant.”

A “Oh, alright, I see.”

“I take a quick glimpse around the room and fail to see any large ape-man.”

A “I feel like we’re missing someone.”

A “Where’s Spears? I could have sworn he would be here.”

Re “Nah man, he’s gone. I saw him on TV the other day, though.”

A “Was he giving a speech or something?”

Re “Sort of, he does commercials for car dealerships now.”

Re “He’s built a reputation for his gimmick of wrecking a car every ad he does.”

A “I… I see.”

“Oh god I thought that was a joke about slamming people into cars.”

“The hours reconnecting with my old friends pass surprisingly quickly, and the time eventually comes for everyone to go home.”

“Lucy excuses herself from the group to go give the closing speech.”

“She goes up onstage and tests the microphone, getting everyone’s attention.”

F “Alright everyone, it’s been a wonderful night.”

F “You don’t have to go home, but you can’t stay here.”

F “Please start finding your designated drivers or calling up the --one taxi driver

--left.”

F “We will be locking the doors at three.”

-- F “And you better not steal my bike again, Hitler.”

“She puts the mic back on its stand and jumps offstage.”

“Reed pats my shoulder.”

Re “You got a ride home man?”

A “I can walk, but thanks.”

“Lucy returns to the minibar and starts raiding the fridge for the last of the alcohol.”

T “There it is.”

Re “Alright, great seeing you guys. I’ll bounce.”

T “We should all meet again for lunch sometime!”

A “Yeah, absolutely. It’s been forever since I’ve been in town, would love to get a tour of what’s new.”

Re “You got it, man. See ya.”

A “Bye, Reed.”

T “Actually, I should get going, too.”

T “I don’t want to get stuck in traffic.”

A “You’ve had the most to drink out of all of us, you gonna be alright?”

“She raises a smug eyebrow and starts walking to the exit.”

T “See you guys.”

“More people trickle out of the room until it’s just Lucy and I.”

“Naomi gives a thumbs-up to Lucy through the door to signal that everyone else has left.”

F “Thanks, Naomi, couldn’t have organized this without you.”

N “Oh, don’t worry about it! It was nice getting to act like a class representative again.”

“The Plastic Persimmon waves and lets the door swing closed with an echoing *clang*.”

A “Sooo… Just the two of us…”

F “Damn you Anon and damn you Bill Withers.”

A “Ha! Still got it.”

F “Yeah yeah.”

“Lucy holds up a plastic bag that *clink*s with each shake.”

F “I was gonna offer you the last of these… Buuuut…”

A “Hey now, let’s not let those go to waste.”

“Her smug grin and laugh says enough.”

A “Rooftop?”

F “Rooftop. Now.”

“She leads the way through the darkened school hallways and stairwell.”

“I can picture all the old posters from my time here along the walls.”

“Oh hey, they finally replaced the door.”

“The door is booted open and the night air has finally cooled down to something breathable now.”

“I turn to the ladder on the side of the stair enclosure and climb up.”

“Lucy hands me the bag and makes her own ascent.”

“From our new vantage point we can see all of the town lit up.”

“And with the stars above and no moon I would say the view is picturesque.”

F “Oi, you gonna hog the drinks?”

“I take out a pair of bottles, using one to pop the cap off the other.”

F “Show-off. They’re twist-offs, ya know.”

“To prove her point she takes the capped one and simply twists it’s top off.”

A “Ow. My ego.”

F “Pfffft. Anyways.”

A “A toast!”

-- A “Ahem. Fuck jannies, fuck triggers, and fuck ko-op.”

F “To adulthood!”

A “To stable employment!”

“We tap our bottles together and chug the sweet ambrosia down.”

F “Aaaaah. I needed this.”

A “Oh?”

“I’m already handing her a second bottle, knowing that she’ll finish her first with her next chug.”

A “I guess you’ve been busy.”

-- F “Teenagers scare the living shit out of me.”

-- F “They could care less as long as someone will bleed.”

F “Dealing with teens is a fuckin’ nightmare.”

F “There’s this one brat, Kenny. The little shit has broken two trumpets already -- and his spine.”

A “Can’t be that bad.”

F “Well you see, it happened during band camp-”

“Lucy’s rant went on for what felt like an hour.”

“Though judging by the pile of beer bottles, it couldn’t have been more than twenty minutes.”

F “-at the fucking dance of all places.”

A “Snrk.”

F “What!”

A “Sounds like us, honestly.”

F “Bullshit.”

A “For real! You were just as bad!”

“Lucy’s elbow finds it’s familiar spot in my side.”

F “Nuh uh.”

A “Yeah huh. Faaaaang.”

“She groans and hides her face in her knees.”

F “Why the fuck was I so edgy?”

A “Trish.”

F “Mrrrr… Okay, so maybe we were that bad.”

A “That’s life for ya.”

“She sighs and relaxes. Her legs stretch forward and she leans back on her arms.”

F “Yeah…”

F “That’s life…”

“I mimic her pose and find myself staring at the small dots spreading across the night sky.”

A “Teacher at your alma mater. Wasn’t really expecting that, ya know.”

F “And you as a sound engineer? Pffft, I figured you’d be making a sexbot or something.”

A “The self-cleaning subroutine never worked right.”

“We chuckle together.”

A “Hey, Lucy…”

“I keep my eyes on the stars, even when Lucy turns to look at me.”

“I can feel heat creep across my face.”

A “I got a contract with a studio here. I’m thinking…”

A “Since I’ll be here for a good while, how about we get some dinner sometime.”

A “Y’know… together…”

“I look at Lucy at last.”

“Her face is turned back to the sky, but there’s a dusting of pink across her cheeks.”

F “I would… I totally would, Anon…”

F “But I’ve got work like you wouldn’t believe.”

A “O-oh. Well, if it’s too mu-”

F “However!”

“Something covers my hand.”

“I quick glimpse down and I see it’s Lucy’s atop mine.”

F “I’ve got time in the morning.”

F “So how bout breakfasts?”

“I smile.”

A “Is that a date then?”

F “I don’t know, is it?”

“Lucy turns back to me and smiles.”

A “It is, then.”

F “You’re such a dweeb.”

A “I know.”

“That didn’t stop Lucy from shuffling closer until our legs were pressed together.”

“That didn’t stop Lucy from leaning her head on my shoulder.”

“I grin and wrap my arm around her shoulder.”

“Feels just like old times, honestly.”

“Like no time has passed since I left Volcadera Bluff.”

“I guess I never did say goodbye to Volcano High.”

F “Thanks, now my face is forever stuck in a cringe, Anon.”

A “...Way to ruin the moment Fang.”

F “You ruined it first with your mumbling.”

A “Fix it then.”

F “You ruined it, you fix it.”

A “Fine I will.”

“My hand cups her cheek gently.”

“Lucy smiles and leans in.”

“Ah, I missed this feeling.”

“Our lips meld together as we embrace just like we were teens again.”

“ENDING FOUR OF FOUR”

“-Fast Times At Volcano High-”

10e (super secret ending) (shitpost) (possible debug meme ending if something breaks)
Fang is alone. She has no nothing, or no one left. Anon is dead, Her parents are dead, and she has nothing going for her except for one thing, a local talk show host invited her on after showing her laughably abysmal solo performance at a local bar. She knows that the reason she was invited is so she could be made fun of, but she went anyway. Fang had her plan. She found the best clothing she could find, a red-and-yellow unisex get up. It was a strange and flamboyant getup, especially for a woman like her, but it will do. She went to the bathroom and put on her makeup and then started heading for the showroom. Once she got in she was escorted

to her prep room, she just sat there, watched television and waited for the host to come and greet her. Fang soon heard a knock at the door and swiftly got up to meet the TV host and his assistant. A short transaction happened between the three in which Fang shows her admiration to the show host. The assistant is not too keen on her, vaguely saying that she is “crazy” and it “wont work”, the host brushes it off, he believes in her. After laying down some ground rules and when she’s coming on, the host starts to leave. Fang then asks one favor of the host
“Murray, one small thing, when you bring me out, can you introduce me as They/Them?”
The assistant then stubbornly asks “what's wrong with your real gender?”
“That’s how I introduced myself at the playing, They/them, remember?”
Murray then questions “Did she?”
“I don’t know” replied the assistant.
“If you say so kid, you know they/them it is. It's good!” Murray then exclaims.
“Thanks Murray” Fang finally replied with, happy they got their way.
The pair of executives then leave, leaving Fang alone to themselves until it's their time to shine. They are eventually called into the area behind the curtains, waiting for their own turn. They watched the Televisor, watching Murray show off their clip again, laughing, making fun of them. Then, Fang is called to make their grand appearance. They start dancing out of the curtains, starting slow, only to start speeding up, spinning around gleefully, going back, and forth, enjoying themselves to the attention and spotlight before shaking Murray’s hand, and proudly kissing one of the co-hosts before sitting down.
“Well, that was quite an entrance!” Said Murray, quite surprised at the enthusiasm that Fang had.
Fang stares around, taking it all in, she finally was on Live TV with their favorite celebrity, finally in the spotlight like she always was meant to be.
Enjoying the experience for a moment, only for Murray to butt in with an obviously not sympathetic
“You okay?”
Only for Fang to reply with “Yeah, this is exactly how I imagined it.”
Murray through his wit tried to recover the obviously awkward situation with a witty joke.
“That makes one of us!”
The crowd laughed and clapped, Fang chuckled a little, loving the attention.
Murray then segwayed into their costume, a bright red coat with clown makeup. A political symbol to most, but not to they/them.
Murray then pointed out that fact, saying “So tell us about this look, we spoke earlier and you said this was not a political statement.”
Fang then replied soon after with “No, no it's not political, you see I'm just trying to make people laugh!”
Murray then shut them down with “How’s that going for you?”
Fang then laughed uncontrollably, it made them feel better. Murray’s dig hit deep, even if they didn’t want to realize that.
Murray then offered to Fang to sing a song. Something Fang wanted to do for a while.
The crowd cheered, and Fang got excited. Fang smiled and pulled out her personal book, a mix of music ideas and ranting. Murray then pointed out the obvious, the book. The audience got a laugh out of that. Fang opened the book and flipped around a bit, looking over their notes, thinking over at all.
Murray sarcastically said “take your time, we have all day, much to the audience's amusement.”
“I am fat fuck”
“I am so fat I eat computers”
“Imagine being at computers”
“So fat you look and see food”
[a]Song names for future use:
Super Hyper Mega Sonic Death Flag
I fucked your mom and she liked it

My Stepdad Terry Drank All My Mountain Dew
OH fuck the drugs are kicking in
Orgasmotronic
I’m not sure why but the burglar joined in on the threesome
Thirty gigantic trigga dicks
Hentai is art and 177013 is a masterpiece
I Gave The Special Kids The Jonestown Special And Now I’m Going To Jail
Fang Gets Arrested For A Hate Crime and Trish and Reed Become Prostitutes
Why Is Hitler On My Bike Pretending To Be A Monkey At 3 AM On A Tuesday
[b]Vehicular Manslaughter
Piledriver into a prius
Suplex you into a subaru
Tigerbomb you into a toyota
Bodyslam you into a bentley
Atomic drop you on top of an aston martin